Pages from the Book of Paris



by Claude C. Washburn

with original drawings by

Lester G. Hornby

Pages from the Book of Paris



By Claude C. Washburn

with original drawings by

Lester G. Hornby

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
Boston Public Library

https://archive.org/details/pagesfrombookofp00wash_0

Pages from
The Book of Paris



Dôme de l'Institut

Dôme de l'Institut

Pages from The Book of Paris




AUX AMBASSADEURS

Aux Ambassadeurs

Pages from The Book of Paris

By

Claude C. Washburn

Etchings and drawings by
Lester G. Hornby



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1910

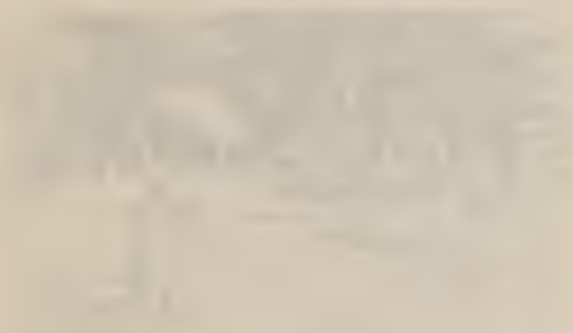
COPYRIGHT, 1910, BY CLAUDE C. WASHBURN AND LESTER G. HORNBY

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published October 1910

Contents

The Book of Paris	1
Sidewalk Cafés	9
I Choose my Home	35
Two Plays	99
Au Bois	123
Love in Paris	157
In my Court	191
Père Lachaise — An Impression	219
An Interview	247



Dans le Jardin du Luxembourg

Illustrations



Illustrations

Dôme de l'Institut	*Half-title*
Aux Ambassadeurs	*Frontispiece*
Dans le Jardin du Luxembourg	v
In Montmartre	1
In the Luxembourg Gardens	4
Sidewalk Cafés	7
Café du Rond Point	18
Proprietor of a Little Shop	24
Along the Quay	33
Street Vendors	36
The Seine at Notre Dame	40
A Parisienne	50
A Little Street near Boulevard St. Germain	60
Au "Rat Mort"	64
On Ile de la Cité	68

Illustrations

Old Passage, Palais Royal	78
Court of the Louvre	82
In the Faubourg St. Germain	86
At La Gaîté	97
Entrance to a "Bal"	100
Street of the Little Butcher Shop	110
A Cocotte	121
In the Bois de Boulogne	124
At the Château de Madrid	134
An Old Habitué	142
Cochers	150
Fiacres	155
La Lettre d'Amour	160
Le Modèle	168
Café in the Bois	180
Linette	188
Towers of St. Sulpice	189
In the Garden of the Luxembourg	192

Illustrations

Old Court in Rue Vercingetorix	200
St. Etienne du Mont	217
Small Shops, Rue de Rennes	222
On Boulevard Montparnasse	242
On the Boulevard	245
Little Balconies	248
In the Quartier du Panthéon	252
Passage des Patriarches — Rue Mouffetard	262
On Boulevard Sebastopol	274
Cafés	278

In Montmartre

The Book of Paris



I

The Book of Paris

THERE are two classes of people who come to Paris, — those to whom, though they may be familiar with every monument, have wandered in every *quartier*, have crossed the Place de la Concorde daily for twenty years, Paris never means more than the sum of its thousand interests; and those who feel within themselves the overpowering, constantly increasing sense of the great city's personality. To the former Paris gives no heed, but in the hearts of the latter she is always writing her book. It is a book of infinite variety, exalted and prophetic, delicately fanciful and gay, sombre with the misery of existence, according to the materials on which it is written; but it is always

significant, never petty. When it is finished, it will hold the story of the human soul; but it will never be finished.

Paris is not the subject of the book: Paris is only the medium. It is in her style, since it is she who writes; but its subject is Life, and whatever, good or bad, has any bearing upon life is to be found somewhere in its pages, without embellishment and without euphemism. Nothing is disguised, nothing falsified; for Paris herself is inscrutable, setting down with purposeless impartiality all that touches her subject. A universal reader for the book, if such were to be found, would need, I think, to be part god, part demon; for no one man could rise high enough to grasp half its noble beauty, and none surely be found base enough to comprehend all its black ugliness.

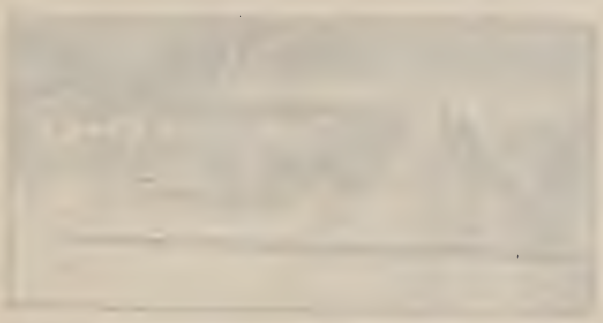
I, too, wandering along the boulevards, musing in the Luxembourg Gardens, or watching at night from the bridges the red and yellow lights swirling in the black river,



In the Luxembourg Gardens



have felt repeatedly the strange thrill of comprehension, and have known that in me also some pages were being added to the Book of Paris, — confused, it was true, often incoherent, and never of the greatest, but of the book, nevertheless. Such as they were, I have tried here to transcribe them for you. The task was not easy. It has been as though I were translating painfully from one language into another. Rigid, sharp-edged words, made for the expression of definite logical thought, were hard moulds into which to pour the fragments of ideas and the shifting, inconsequential moods that Paris gave me. Something, however, of the original always shines through even the worst translation, and for the substance of the rambling essays that follow I make no apology. If the thoughts and the feelings with which Paris filled me were indeed, as I truly think them, pages from the book of herself, then, however minor, they cannot but have some worth.



Sidewalk Cafés

Sidewalk Cafés



II

Sidewalk Cafés



NEVER have been able to appreciate London. It is not that I am unmoved by its monuments, that I do not feel a reverent awe before the Abbey, that the Temple leaves me cold; or that to watch the great murky Thames flowing beneath the Tower Bridge at sunset does not stir me strangely; but simply that the spirit of the whole place remains aloof from me, outside my comprehension, like the mood of a poem in a foreign language with which I am unfamiliar, or which I can but spell out haltingly. Often, in gazing down from the top of an omnibus on the rush of the throng in a crowded gray-walled street, I have felt, with the swift, poignant sensation that one has in

searching his mind for a forgotten name, that I was upon the point of understanding, that at last the whole huge city was about to assume an entity for me; when suddenly we would pass, almost within arm's reach, an insistent London statue, and I would find myself plunged into the deadening and overwhelming sense of the commonplaceness of all things, — myself included, — and the gleam would be gone. For the greatest harm in ugliness is not the sharp, quickly-passed pain which it inflicts, but the more enduring numbness and stupor it imparts to our minds. It seems to me now, in reviewing these occurrences, that each time it was the statue of Queen Victoria that so depressed me; but this is probably a delusion, due to the fact that nearly all London statues resemble that kindly monarch. Yet it is less the ugliness of London which prevents one's understanding it, than the fact that one is always part and parcel of it. Fight as one may to preserve his own personality, he feels it slipping

from him, and himself but an infinitely unimportant fragment of the mass. Only a collective existence is possible. One cannot study these millions of which one is part; one has no mental vantage-ground. There is no solitude possible in a London throng.

It is the fierce hopelessness of this struggle to retain his own identity that makes an individualist so unhappy in London; for an individualist must in the midst of everything feel himself detached from the rest of life, and here no detachment is possible. That there should have arisen in the press of this collectivism men capable of guarding their own souls, of living in the crowd but aloof from it, and so framing for themselves a conception of life out of this relentless overbearing unity, appears to me a miracle; but there have been many, the splendid exceptions which have made England's glory. De Quincey, Dickens, Thackeray, Meredith, — to name only a few, — all of them lived their own lives, and, reflecting in the

solitude of their individualism, found, each according to the measure of his genius, a greater or a lesser meaning, a deeper or a more superficial significance, in this chaos that engulfs smaller men.

In France the individual is the unit; but in England the unit is the whole. London is only England intensified. The individual rights of which the Englishman is so proud are only material rights that affect his bodily comfort; of genuine personal liberty he has no conception. He may walk the streets in almost complete safety from physical attack; but he has thrust upon him from childhood the cold formalism of an established religion. The precincts of his property are rigorously protected against aggression; but socially he himself is born into as iron-clad a system of slavery as has ever existed. Rich or poor, of high rank or low, he is classified at birth as a member of a caste in which not the individual but the type is the reality. A certain mode of existence, and even a

certain sharply marked-out attitude of mind, are characteristic of each class, and this conventionalism extends to the most minute trivialities; for nothing is trivial where nothing is individual but always a symbol of the whole. Suggest to an Englishman an act that would be an infringement, however slight, on a class to which he does not belong: he will not reply, "I cannot do that because — "; but simply, "That is not done." The system is perfect.

Nor does the Englishman want it changed. I can find no analogy for the willing pride with which he accepts his bondage. Imagine all the negroes of the South rising as one man at the time of the emancipation, crying, "We will not be free," and turning in anger on President Lincoln, and you have but a feeble likeness to the attitude of the English toward their would-be liberators; for the negroes were only stupid children, while the English are a race of men, enlightened, "progressive," — whatever that

may mean, — almost civilized indeed, one would say, if it were not for their deplorable lack of taste.

A refusal to acknowledge any part of the system would not entail loss of material privileges, — materially, and materially alone, the Englishman is free, — but it would mean social ostracism, misunderstanding, contempt, — all the things which, as they are the least material, are the hardest for the genuinely free man to bear. The lives of England's great men, — poets, novelists, philosophers, — who even in London raised themselves above the crowd and kept clear of the machine, have not often been easy. For they, standing aside and observing the whole, saw faults and pointed out wrongs. In England "that is not done." These men were strong personalities. They achieved their individualism themselves; for in England there are no aids to solitude.

But giants are rare, and for humbler individualists a sojourn in London is misery, a

period of feeling his ideas effaced, his personality suspended. Formerly I used to force myself to stay on, feeling that I must not go until I had been somehow enabled to get apart from and understand the monster, but my heroism never came to anything. A day always arrived when my longing for France grew too strong, and I would take a boat for Calais or Dieppe. The experience was, I dare say, bad for my character; for as my virtue never resulted in success, I at last reached the conclusion that it is not the disagreeable but the pleasant things in life which are good for one, so that now I never do anything I do not care to do.

Any one who has traveled much by mountain-railways knows the sensation of ease and relaxation one receives when, after grinding painfully down a long grade, the brakes are at last released and the train glides smoothly on. I can find no other simile to express the relief with which one throws off the yoke of London. I have never crossed from England

to France without experiencing this emotion, and I have never arrived in Paris without a sense of exhilaration in which I felt my own personality rise, and assert itself, and seem to me worth while. No other city can ever mean to me what Paris means. As I sit here writing, needing only to lift my eyes to the window to see the gray Seine flowing beneath and the misty blue-gray sky softening the mass of houses beyond the river, I feel a rush of gratitude for all that Paris has given me.

As a child, before I had been out of America, it was always Florence of which I dreamed; and indeed, though, seen, Florence proved quite different from the picture I had made of it, the realization was no disappointment. But in Florence one leads only the most perfect of existences. One is content to feel: one has no need of thinking. In any one not born to it the excess of beauty of the Tuscan city causes a kind of intoxication that inhibits achievement. One might

become witty if he lived long in Florence, — most people do, I believe: — Marcel Schwob might have written his "Mimes" there; — but for real achievement a state of mental turmoil is necessary, and how is one to arouse a mental turmoil before the warm sun-bathed splendor of these brown old Italian palaces, or at Settignano, where the nightingales sing all night and all day too, and where the cypresses turn blue-black in the moonlight?

But in Paris one lives, — so fully, and richly, and tumultuously, that I wonder sometimes whether one is not living his life too fast, like a mouse under oxygen, and whether one will not die at thirty. One's mind seethes. One is overwhelmed with ideas. Little or great, — what does it matter? What matters is that here whoever comes really to know Paris learns to be himself at his truest, to think the deepest thoughts of which he is capable. All Paris is an inspiration to individualism. The sweeping vastness of the Place de la Con-

corde is the emblem of it; the sidewalk cafés are its symbol.

In Paris every man has a favorite café to which he pays allegiance, and in his choice he reveals something of his character; for it is only in the outward material expression of themselves — busy, white-aproned waiters, cane chairs, and little marble-topped tables, covering half the sidewalk on the boulevards, all of it in narrow streets, — that these thousand havens resemble one another; more profoundly each has its own individuality. The youth seeks the maiden who, born to be his mate, languishes somewhere or other in expectation of his coming; with far more certainty of success he may in Paris go in quest of a café which shall just fit his character. Moreover, the café is always there waiting, whereas maidens have been known to — But that has nothing to do with the subject.

It took me a long time to find my café, a troubled time in which I tried many sorts, feeling in each — though in many I recog-

Café du Rond Point



CAFÉ DU ROND POINT

nized a certain charm — a kind of uneasiness akin to that of a man in clothes made for some one else. I early saw that it was not among the sleepy little cafés of quiet, secluded streets that I should discover mine; for, as one feels himself most a part of life in the fields where there is no other human in sight, so it is in the very centre of the throng that one is capable of the completest detachment. The habitués of these retired places, who chatted comfortably over their games of dominoes and *manille*, were pleasant, kindly men for whom I felt sympathy, but they were not individualists. They were, for the greater part, petty employés of some *bureau*, in search of rest after their six hours of dreary mechanical work; and rest is to be found in losing one's identity, in becoming a part of life, not in separating one's self from it. The individualist does not desire rest. What he strives for is the ability to regard unhampered the great pageant of life, as though he himself bore no relation to it;

and how should there be rest in the contemplation of this strange spectacle, with its absurdities which he labors to reconcile, and its heterogeneity in which he struggles to find some meaning?

No, the café of my desire would be one of the many that line the wide, feverish boulevards. That was clear, — far less clear which. The Café de la Paix I knew, to begin with, was out of the question. In that ostentatious resort beloved of foreigners, where one is assaulted by vendors of post-cards, furs, and maps of Paris, and where one hears all about him his native tongue spoken with a high nasal intensity characteristic of it nowhere except in Europe, solitude is as impossible as in London itself. But, the Café de la Paix eliminated, there remained still a discouraging number, among which somewhere was mine.

I spent many afternoons in fruitless search; then one evening I found it, in the only fashion by which one ever finds anything worth

while, — quite by chance. I do not remember where I was going, or why, only that I was being carried on in the crowd that streams along the Boulevard des Italiens at the theatre hour, when suddenly, before one of the numberless displays of little tables (and for what reason this one, I wonder, more than another?), I turned in a flash of recognition. "Why, it's my café!" I exclaimed in the tone with which one greets an old friend. It was, without a doubt. Although I had surely never been there before, everything seemed natural and right. Even the faces of the men at the tables appeared familiar. For, as in Paris one chooses the café with the spirit of which he is most in sympathy, so in each the habitués form a circle of men, united, not, as in a *salon*, by the same habits of life, but by the same habits of thought, which is a closer bond. We rarely converse at my café, but we bow to one another as we arrive, and the absence of one at his accustomed hour is remarked by the rest.

There is to me something fine in this curious intimacy of men who, never having exchanged banalities, indifferent to one another's names and conditions, by their ignorance of the petty differences among themselves efface them, and annihilate all the barriers — social and moral prejudices, personal foibles — over which in the ordinary course of acquaintance one must struggle, or around which one must circuitously pass, — and arrive at once at the silent sympathy, the tacit recognition of similarity, that is friendship.

The oddest thing about my café, one that has often made me smile, is its title, which implies mirth, revelry, even debauch, whereas in fact no other boulevard café surely is as serious and subdued as this one. It is called, — but, after all, why should I tell you its name? If it is not your café, to go there would be to waste your time; and if it is yours, you will find it some day of yourself; or perhaps you have found it already, and

are one of the unknown friends who nod kindly to me as I slip into my place.

I do not know what your thoughts may be there, if that is true, but my own are strange, and no less strange that other men have been thinking them these thousand years. Conflicting, overwhelming impressions, tumultuous fragments of ideas without beginning or end, confused reflections that I am impotent to classify ; strange thoughts indeed, — pitiful, ironic, gay sometimes, but always at bottom sad ; for although here I am in the tranquil back-waters, there, only a few feet away, all life is flowing past. Verlaine's splendid lines come back to me : —

> " Et tu coules toujours, Seine, et tout en rampant,
> Tu traines dans Paris ton cours de vieux serpent,
> De vieux serpent boueux, emportant vers tes havres
> Tes cargaisons de bois, de houille, et de cadavres."

But this is a greater river than the Seine. It too carries its proud ships and its derelicts — and its corpses ; only it flows into an unknown sea.

At first in the crowd drifting by me it is always individuals that I remark. A man passes close to me, holding a little girl of six by the hand, which for greater safety he keeps so high that she walks chiefly with her left foot, barely touching the ground from time to time with her right. She stumbles along contentedly, looking up at us, wide-eyed but incuriously, interested really only in a fruitless attempt to touch each in the nearest row of tables as she goes by. It occurs to me with a swift glimpse of myself (for in this isolation of the mind one's self seems as separate and objective as the rest of the world), that she is a very fortunate child. She knows what she wants and goes straight for it. That is the great thing, — to know what one wants and try for it. Nothing else matters much, — least of all whether one gets it or not. I hope she may always keep the characteristic, and I think, as I glance up at the face of her father, that she will. He is a big burly man of the class that is not the

Proprietor of a Little Shop



People, nor yet quite the littlest *bourgeoisie:* proprietor, I imagine, of some small shop. As he strolls by (he is nearly past now), everything in his manner, from the erect poise of the head to the easy fashion with which he lets others avoid him rather than go out of his way himself, proclaims the man of fixed habits and settled life, accepting unreservedly the world as he finds it, with no desire to change it. Not a man of high aspirations, as aspirations are counted, but sure of the ones he has, — with his troubles, of course : small money matters chiefly, rent that comes due too frequently, clients who will not pay their bills ; blessed material troubles. Himself he never doubts, or the importance of his existence. Oh, the ease and the tranquillity and the content that there must be in never having questioned one's self! Never to have felt rush over one, paralyzing the mind, inhibiting achievement, the sudden doubt of one's ability to do what one is attempting! Never to have passed

through the grim hours when the thought of all the men who have tried similarly and failed catches one like physical fear! For one who aims at anything creative there are periods of exhilaration, none of content. The exultant moments of swift accomplishment are dearly bought: for every such there are ten of bitter depression. Those who are beset with lofty aspirations pass through days blacker than the man in the street and his little daughter will ever know.

But they have been gone these ten minutes, and I look out again on the throng that is drifting by. Like the Ancient Mariner, I may not choose my victims. I cannot deliberately select this or that person as a theme to ponder. It is as if some one else chose for me,—some perverse fairy in whose choice there is neither reason nor plausibility. So this time I skip helplessly a man who might be a murderer, and another who is surely a musician, to feel my attention caught, illogically enough, by a couple who saunter past.

They are young, he less than twenty-eight, she barely twenty, and they are newly married. She clings to his arm with a pretty air of combined confidence in him and fear of all the rest of the world; and in the condescending benevolence with which he accepts her attitude there is the unmistakable mark of a husband destined to be happy, adored, and never found out. They are, I fancy, on their wedding-trip; at any rate they are *de province*. That is clear from a dozen little things, but most of all from the young man's walk, a kind of loiter, in the course of which he turns indolently now and again to gaze slowly right and left. The Parisian, however leisurely his gait, has always the decisive air of one accustomed to swift judgments; when he looks about him in the streets, it is with a rapid inclusive glance. My eyes meet those of the young woman for an instant; she has pretty eyes set in an agreeable, rather characterless face, — at its best now for the glow of youth and happiness that suffuses it, — but

with nothing in them to hold me; moreover, she turns them away almost immediately, and I fix my own on her husband.

Caste distinctions are not sharply defined in this democratic country, where a family may with equal facility rise a class higher or sink one lower in a single generation; but he surely is of the upper *bourgeoisie*, probably the *bourgeoisie* of affairs. The low, smooth forehead, placid with the placidity that comes from the total absence of abstract ideas, the firm mouth and the faint lines about it revealing notions that you would call convictions if you liked the type, prejudices if you did not, all indicate as much. It is a good class, a class of men who do, not of men who think; and, after all,—as any artist or author will loftily admit,—there must be men to do the things that have to be done. But the man's life is planned; he knows the things he is to do; and so it is with the woman that I feel the greater sympathy. She has, unless I misjudge her, so pitifully little to inter-

est her in all the years that stretch ahead when her husband will have so much! I hope that she may bear many children, and I think I hope that there may be money-troubles in her husband's affairs, — not deadening, cramping troubles, but just enough so that existence may not be too easy for her, and, especially, enough so that the journey to Paris may not be repeated, though often projected. For so, seen in a mist of youth and love, and looked back at with a wistful tenderness, Paris will take on for her a beauty that, beautiful as it is, neither it nor any other city out of dreams has ever possessed.

Afterwards such thoughts seem to me often, as they seem to you now, perhaps, absurdly arrogant and superior; and so indeed they would be if it were I, the *I* of little vices, petty virtues, and hampering prejudices, who was thinking them. But it is not that *I;* for in this strange separation of one's self from the rest of life one seems to cast off for the time being the mortality

of his nature and to swell suddenly from the atom, the infinitely small and unimportant part of the whole, to the colossus for whom all things exist. Poor impotent colossus, — colossus for himself alone! That is the bitterest reflection for me, — that I can do nothing, cannot change one thing of the many that seem so desperately to need changing; can only think and think. And yet I know that if all at once the power of a God to reshape these people's lives, to "remould" them "nearer to the heart's desire," were given me, I should not dare so much as lift a finger.

And this haggard brilliant creature who passes now, — not for her?

Civilization is marching onward. Everything serves some noble purpose. "God 's in his heaven — all 's right with the world." No doubt. Meanwhile sit in my sidewalk café, look out at the woman-of-the-streets, and say it if you can.

The horror of her is that she is not pit-

iful. In the hard mouth there is no expression; in the cold eyes that wander restlessly from one to another of the men about her there is no emotion, — only the single dull question; in the practised raising of the skirts there is no semblance of passion. She is scarcely more than an automaton now. Habits hold her to existence, but there is no life left. Even pain is but dully felt, I am sure, and pleasure scarcely at all. Nothing of the woman remains. Did I not say that this river too carried its corpses?

But suddenly, in the stream pouring by me, individuals seem no longer to exist by themselves. *Bourgeois* and prostitute and shopkeeper and the thousand others lose their identity, and I see them only as fragments of the whole swirling around together like dust-specks in a ray of sunlight. The ironic thought strikes me that each of these appears to himself the centre of the confusion, and struggles and jostles his neighbors

in the endeavor to defeat the rest and achieve his own purposes. What, I wonder, can be the meaning in this which looks so meaningless? Is there indeed a meaning? What if it is not a plan, not even a plan gone wrong, but just no plan at all? What if in all the years that we have hunted for the reason of things, there was simply no reason to find? What if in all the centuries that we have prayed our contradictory prayers, there was No One to hear? What if—

Some one passing between the tables brushes my sleeve. I start painfully, like one waking from a dream, suddenly conscious that I too am part of life. I am no longer the colossus,—only the atom; and I am very tired. I glance down. My vermouth stands untouched on the table. I drink it hastily, and leaving beside the glass the few sous that pay for this hour of isolation, I step out into the stream, and become part of it, and am swept away.

Along the Quay

I Choose my Home



III

I Choose My Home

TO–DAY," I said to myself decidedly, as I opened my eyes, "I must choose my home."

It was the fault of the breeze, — the little breeze that crept in through my open bedroom window, scattering sunlight across the floor, and carrying a hundred early-morning sounds and perfumes, — the twittering of sparrows in the court, the fragrance of spring flowers, and even the plaintive chant of the chickweed-vendor in a distant street, crying his "*Mouron pour les petits oiseaux.*" All May was in the breeze. It set one tingling with the desire to do something, but something pleasant, unpractical, inconsequent, not too definite, — and so, since choosing my home is the most beau-

tifully useless of all my occupations, I settled on it at once.

"*Bon jour, Monsieur Claude,*" said Eugénie, entering with hot water; "*vous avez bien dormi?*"

"*Bon jour, Eugénie; très bien, merci,*" I replied. "*Aujourd'hui, Eugénie, je vais choisir une maison pour moi,*" I added firmly.

"*Vrai, Monsieur Claude?*" said Eugénie sympathetically, but without surprise. It is impossible for me to surprise Eugénie. This is due partly to her having been born in Paris, — a quality as rare as beauty, — and partly to the fact that she is consumed with a devotion to me, which does not in the least prevent her from cheating me in buying groceries, but which puts astonishment at anything I may say out of the question, as a kind of disloyalty. In reviewing my characteristics, I have never been able to discover certainly what it is in me that appeals to Eugénie; but the secret may be that, since I am unable to be impersonal with women

Street Venders


PARIS
RUE ST. JACQUES

of any class except those whom I dislike, she feels in the tone with which I speak to her a recognition of her sex. If Eugénie were a mistress, her affection would no doubt take the form of caresses; as she is a servant, she expends it on polishing my shoes when they do not need it, and sometimes even when they do. Not, however, that my position is deficient in other than utilitarian pleasures. Eugénie is the only person who has ever considered me handsome. It was a few evenings ago, while she stood patiently holding a *boutonnière*, and I was adjusting a tie, that I became aware of the delusion.

"You will observe, Eugénie," I remarked, "a great difference in mirrors. Now this one," I said, with a vain endeavor to get near enough to judge of my success, "makes me appear almost good-looking, while in this," crossing the room to another, "I am really ugly!"

"A strange glass, indeed, Monsieur

Claude," exclaimed Eugénie, with a sincerity which I should be the last to question, "to make you look ugly!"

Our early-morning conversations, when she has entered with hot water and shoes, and I am lying in that delicious state of profound meditation on nothing whatever that just precedes getting up, afford me unfailing amusement; for Eugénie has a spontaneous sense of humor rare in a woman, and with inimitable verve recounts how, by encouraging the *boulangère* in the next street to relate her amours, she succeeded in passing a demonetized two-franc piece — Napoleon III uncrowned — which some one had dishonestly given me; and repeats the piteous plaint of the coal-dealer's assistant over his inability to get himself white enough on Sunday to be accorded the kisses of his *promise*, and have anything of the day left. But on this particular morning the conversation was serious.

"In what quarter, Eugénie, should you

advise me to look for my house?" I inquired anxiously.

"Oh," said Eugénie, closing the window, "the *quartier de l'Etoile*, *Monsieur Claude*. *Il n'y a que ça de vraiment chic*."

"Good," I thought to myself, smiling.

Eugénie is the only woman I have ever known in whom bad taste is consistent and unfailing. Others — many others — have it most of the time, but subject to annoying and unexpected relapses; with her it is always to be depended upon. Whenever I have impulsively bought a vase, of which on critical reflection I begin to have my doubts, I ask Eugénie for her opinion; and if I feel from the tone of her praise that she really likes it, I give it away as a wedding present. It is only fair to myself to say that I have never acquired anything in Paris over which Eugénie grew genuinely enthusiastic. And so now, when she so confidently recommended the *quartier de l'Etoile*, my doubts were confirmed, and I knew that I might

in all tranquillity omit it from my wanderings. Except for the Champs Elysées and the circle about the noble Arc de Triomphe, that district, with its imposing houses and its enormous new hotels beloved of my countrymen, has seemed to me, for all its ostentation, rather characterless. I sometimes amuse myself by imagining what sort of person would typify a house, or a street, or even a whole section of Paris. For the *quartier de l'Etoile* it would be the pompous man who enunciates banalities as though they were vital, newly discovered truths.

I inhabit — perhaps you should be told — a little apartment in Passy, and shall probably as long as I live. That is why, on this sunny, intoxicating May morning, choosing my home seemed the gayest, most harmoniously frivolous and light-hearted thing I could do. That, too, was why I was to set about it so seriously. I have always been able to put my best energy into the search for something which it was unnecessary to find.

The Seine at Notre Dame



NOTRE DAME FROM THE SEINE

When I had dressed, and sat sipping my coffee, I was still deep in reflection, but when at last I set the cup down, my decision was taken.

"I will go first of all," I said, "to the Boulevard Maillot."

(Oh, Eugénie! Eugénie! Even though I rejected your suggestion, had it not insidiously left me something of your taste for the fleshpots?)

Outside every one was singing, — the *cochers* on their boxes, the boys wheeling delivery-carts, the servants on their way to market. It was still early: the world that is too proud to sing in the street was not yet astir. Even my surly concierge, I remembered joyfully, had been emitting strange raucous sounds which I chose now to believe were song; and when a concierge sings! . . .

Beneath the quay the Seine rippled daintily by, playing prettily with the reflections of its bridges, and sparkling in the wake of the little boats — the *bateaux mouches* — that

flit swallow-like in great curves from stopping-point to stopping-point along it. Over everything, touching softly the glistening roofs of houses and the thousand chimney-tops, hung a delicately moistly blue sky, cloudless, but streaked with faint patches of vapor.

> "Le ciel est, pardessus le toit,
> Si bleu, si calme!"

I sang to myself. Verses of Verlaine's are continually rising to one's lips here; for of all the thousands who have felt the strange wistful appeal of Paris, he alone has been able to turn it into words.

I could not bring myself to leave the river yet, and so strolled along it for a way, up toward the city proper. A strange way surely of going to the Boulevard Maillot. — No matter! On this radiant haphazard morning I would do nothing in the most direct fashion.

On its hill ahead, and slightly to my left, rose the palace of the Trocadéro, its two

lofty towers stained pink in the sunlight. People shake their heads over the Trocadéro; and indeed, regarding it nearly, one finds little to say for it. It was built in a period of atrocious taste, of which it is, if the truth must be told, a fair example. Yet I, for one, should be sorry if it were gone; for in the distance its vulgarity fades from sight, and its huge dome and tall oriental minarets take on, especially in early morning or just at sunset, a certain massive charm. After all, as my friend the artist says, there is not much difference between good architecture and bad, from a little way off. Besides, unfortunate as it is, the Trocadéro has not, even when seen close at hand, the kind of badness that offends, possibly because its vastness is not in the least impressive. There is an apologetic air about it that makes one think of some harmless pathetic monster who should say sorrowfully, "I know I 'm ugly, but I can't help it"; and that gives one an absurd desire to pet it. "Don't laugh," I said

to myself, when I had climbed up past the bronze animals in the garden that leads to it, and was crossing its enormous portico; "Don't laugh: you might make it feel badly."

Out into the big empty Place du Trocadéro, down the Avenue d'Eylau and the long rue des Belles Feuilles, to the Porte Dauphine. I left the city by this gate and turned into the Allée des Fortifications, that skirts the edge of the Bois de Boulogne. From within the Bois came the soft patter of children's voices, the song of birds, and the fragrance of acacias; and all, it seemed, were calling to me.

"No! No! No!" I said, laughing, "not to-day!"

I must have said it aloud, for a passer-by turned suddenly to look at me; but there was only kindliness in his smile. It was May.

The Boulevard Maillot, which is outside the city limits, runs along the Bois from the Porte Maillot clear to the river. It changes

its name, to be sure, at the Avenue de Madrid, where it turns sharply; but I do not like its second name, and shall speak of it here, if you please, as though it had kept its initial one. For the first ten minutes of following it in its course away from the city gate, I regarded the boulevard with disapproval. There was no lure in the mediocrity of these smug dwellings, resembling unfortunately those that crowd the Newtons or other of the towns about Boston. Here lived the people who, in ordering a jewel or two sent them, would not be able to say "The Boulevard Maillot" without a slight compression of the lips or a touch of consciousness in the tone. I was considering taking a home among the houses where live those to whom the shopkeeper would of his own accord observe, "The Boulevard Maillot, doubtless. What number, if you please, monsieur?" As I continued on my way, however, the houses drew slowly back from the street, and each seemed a little less banal than the one before, — to

have subtly more of an air of breeding: it was like the transformation scene in a palace of illusions, — until at last the acme was reached in a limitless succession of palaces set, among vine-covered oaks and cedars, deep in grounds that were screened from too complete a scrutiny by splendid flowering hedges, but in which, nevertheless, one could from the opposite side of the street, by standing on tip-toe, discern flower-beds, columns, and the greenest of green turf, with sometimes a gardener sprinkling it. The white pillars of little arbors gleamed among the foliage. Everything here was ordered, faultless and serene, exhaling an agreeable aroma of riches. Only a young girl picking roses was needed to make of it a Royal Academy picture.

I fell, I confess, under the spell; yet, though I lingered pleasantly before many of these mansions, it was less in a liking for any particular one among them, than in an appreciation of the idea they collectively expressed,

— life freed from all petty concern with existence, and simplified by a lavish systematic complexity (the only manner in which it can be honestly simplified to-day). Never to have to say to myself, "You can't afford this," "You 'll have to give up that"; never to consider sadly that one's frock-coat is becoming worn; to be robbed, doubtless, in a thousand fashions, but never to care! Oh, decidedly, it was the only way of living! And I could be trusted with it, too. My tastes were fixed; could wealth destroy my love of books, of pictures, and of music?

My fancy was loose now, and dragging me along frantically. Innumerable projects presented themselves. I would eliminate ugliness from all about me; I would make my home so beautiful that artists and authors and even musicians should forget their petty feuds in its suave atmosphere, and become personally the finer selves that they habitually put only into their work. Each of my dinners should be a poem; I could see the

table now, — and the whole room, — with the candle-light falling on old china and bringing out soft faded colors in the tapestries on the walls. The dining-room would be Gothic, I supposed, — or Renaissance. At any rate, the salon should be Louis XIII. But I would not furnish my house hastily; many rooms would remain bare a long time. It would be folly to deny myself the joy of the slow accumulation in which each chair or cabinet represents a discovery. I remembered pieces of furniture seen recently. There had been an exquisite Louis XVI dressing-table in the window of a shop on the Quai Voltaire. I hoped it had not been sold; it was just the thing for a —

"Yes," said Fancy, "go on — for a boudoir! Of course you'll have a wife. Everybody on the Boulevard Maillot has one." I stopped short.

"A wife! Are you sure?" I asked.

"Absolutely certain."

A wife. I thought with a shiver of a dream

I had recently had, in which I was being married, going through the formalities of the rite against my will, muttering "yes" where I wanted to shout "no," and recovering from my state of submissiveness only when the last guest had departed and I was left alone with my bride.

"But," I had cried then, — and it did seem to me afterwards to have been a bit rude of me, — "I don't want to be married! Can't you understand?" (She really appeared not to.) "I want to be free! free!" — and so awoke.

A wife! Why should she come now, to spoil everything? I would not give in at once.

"But you see," I suggested, "I'd be different from the others: I'd be an eccentric."

"Nonsense," said Fancy sternly. "If you 're going to live on the Boulevard Maillot, you must do as the Boulevard Maillot does."

Duty! Responsibility! Concern for what

others might think! — What a Pandora's box this imaginary helpmate was opening. In Passy I had suppressed duty; I did only what I cared to do, and I rarely saw the people I disliked. Could it be that on the Boulevard Maillot one's liberty was less? A wife —

"Why not?" said Fancy coaxingly. "You would n't have to see her often. You would play with your friends and she with hers, and you 'd have separate suites of apartments, — it would n't be bad. On pleasant mornings you 'd breakfast together in the garden. You 'd get there first, and presently she would come delicately down the steps, in a soft trailing morning-gown" —

I smiled in surrender. Morning-gowns were attractive. I was off again now, but with less exhilaration, and more cautiously, like a rider who has had a bad fall. I would have horses, I thought, and an automobile, — one automobile, what was I thinking of? — two, even three, perhaps. But this was the end.



A Parisienne

"It's time you left the Boulevard Maillot," I said sternly to myself. "You are becoming too extravagant."

One must preserve plausibility even in the search for the impossible. Besides, although to correct one's self for actual faults is so disagreeable an occupation that no wise man would spend a moment's time on it, to reprove one's self for sins that are only of the imagination is an inexhaustible pleasure. There is no bitterness, and the virtuous glow is quite as warm as though the offence had been real. So now it was with genuine relish that I made up my mind to do penance, — particularly as the penance meant merely a journey to Montmartre. The truly tolerant man is not the man who is lenient toward the faults of others, but he who is lenient toward his own; he has so much more to forgive. But when I had taken the little tramway of the Val d'Or to the Porte Maillot, had descended into the musty depths of the Métro, and was being whirled noisily

through the dim tunnels beneath Paris, I wondered whether, after all, it was not the thought of the wife that had driven me from the Boulevard Maillot.

Marriage seems to me an ignominious institution. As I steer out among the matrimonial rocks, that beset one's early progress, toward the open sea of recognized bachelordom, where there is only an occasional clearly seen reef, easy to avoid for one with skill enough to get so far, I feel an increasing exultation. There are men who look upon the fact of having taken a wife with pride, as though they had achieved something difficult. Poor fools, not to see that any one — be he as ill-favored as Cerberus or as dull as a maxim of Sir John Lubbock's — can marry, and that they have fallen dupe to Nature! But I know her now, the jade, for what she is, — wily, unscrupulous, deceitful, having at heart a single end, the perpetuation of the race, to reach which she will employ no matter what means. The individual cares

nothing for the race, and Nature cares nothing for the individual, except as he forms part of it. But she needs him, and so she sets her lying snares, into one of which he rushes, silly dreamer, thinking it the gate to paradise, only to find himself a slave. For Nature is pitiless in her unconcern for the man once caught. He must serve her purpose now; illusions are no longer necessary.

The mystery of love, feminine charm, the dream of an embodied ideal, — they appeal to me too, almost irresistibly at times; but I know them for the bait they are, and, aware of the steel springs beneath, find somehow strength to turn aside. I may be trapped one day, but it will at least be with my eyes open, and knowing that I am being deceived.

There is one other lure which I have not yet felt, but which Nature will surely hold out to me when I have grown a little older, — for she never gives any one up, — the vision of comfort, domesticity, a fireside, and slippers. It is the most dangerous of all; for

while the rest were beautiful lies, this has a foundation of truth. It is the basest, too. The young man's search for a mate in whom shall be nothing lower than what is finest in himself, the endeavor to grasp absolute perfection; however utopian and pre-doomed to failure such attempts, they are noble dreams; but the desire for comfort is the desire for mediocrity, which lurks somewhere in all of us, — except, perhaps, in poets. Comfort degrades. He who has succumbed to its tranquil charm is forever lost to ideas and to creative achievement. The melancholy reflection is that he did not need to be. The opposite of *commonplace* is not *talented*, but *worth while;* and whoever is conscious of general ideas, no matter how primitive or confused, is worth while. No one is commonplace at twenty; no one need be at forty-five. Mediocrity is not a lack of distinction, but a state of mind. May heaven preserve us all from the lotos-flower! Men are sometimes to be found, great enough to undergo mar-

riage — even a happy marriage — without degeneration; but, considering myself, I shake my head. As the manuals of physiology that we studied in the grammar-school used to say about the use of alcohol: "Since the evil results are so certain and the good so problematic, surely the wisest course is to abstain altogether." Thus I reflected in the Paris subway, as the electric train carried me swiftly away from the Boulevard Maillot and the home that grew every moment less to my taste.

Pigalle! I left the car, ascended a musty staircase, pushed open a door, and stood, just outside, blinking in the sudden light. The Métro, like most other useful contrivances, is disagreeable; but it has its merits. There is, after all, something enchanted and Arabian about it. If I had come to Montmartre from the Boulevard Maillot by tram, by bus, or on foot, the alteration in my surroundings would have taken place so gradually that the final contrast would have been

dulled; as it was, had the genie of the ring snatched me up and set me down here, the change could not have been sharper or more absolute. The Boulevard Maillot had been dignified, handsome, and somewhat too well-bred; the Place Pigalle was careless, ugly, and not well-bred at all. The Boulevard Maillot had breathed a genteel repression; the Place Pigalle, though it was doing nothing out of the way now, lacked decorum, like a chorus-girl in repose.

I stood for a moment deliberating where to go first, until the thought of how wonderful Paris must appear this morning from the Butte led me finally into the rue des Martyrs, and so onward, until I came to the foot of the long successive flights of steps that lead to the crest of the hill on which rises the Basilica of the Sacré Cœur. Pausing here to look up, I noted with appreciation the way the dilapidated houses leaned, in all the picturesqueness of squalor, over the dingy stairs. On one of the landings far above me,

and half in shadow, half in a pool of sunlight that had fallen, a slanting golden shower, from a gap in the rickety roofs of tenements, a market-woman had paused for breath in her slow descent. Her ample skirts were pinned up, and her extended left arm pressed against her hip a basket of yellow carrots and dusty red beets. A crimson handkerchief was tied about her head. She might have been an Italian of the south, and this a street in Naples, dating from the Middle Ages. So pervasive seemed the mellow spirit of age in this curious thoroughfare, that the phrases "old houses" and "ancient stairs" passed agreeably through my mind.

Then suddenly I became aware — not through anything false or melodramatic in the scene, but through an unfortunate acquaintance with the historical geography of Paris — that I was being deceived: the effect of antiquity in my surroundings was an illusion. Here, no longer ago than the forties, were little suburban homes; pleasant gardens

covered the slopes of this hill, and attractive cottages crowned it. This was the Montrouge of fifty years ago. As I climbed the stairs I looked critically from right to left for some flaw in the setting, for the absence of some touch that only an accumulation of centuries could give; but in vain. The atmosphere of extreme age that seemed to hang over these houses, built within the memory of many a man, was as subtle and convincing as that one feels in Amalfi, and I found myself driven to the conclusion that the mysterious satisfying impression of antiquity is aroused not by antiquity itself but by a certain arrangement of material. Dilapidation alone will not bring it (there were, I remembered, streets as decayed and tumble-down as this in Chicago, and heaven knows there was no glamour of antiquity about them!), but dilapidation must enter in. The effect of age obtained by this narrow street of stairs up which I climbed was purely fortuitous. Until now the requisite arrange-

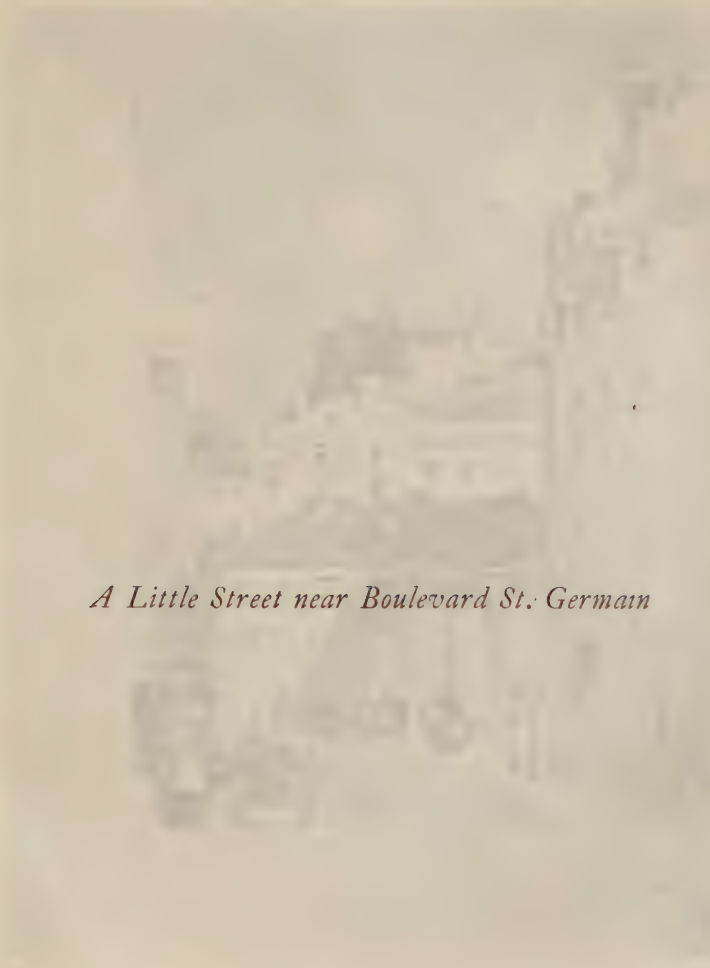
ment had been unconscious, a matter of chance; but it need not be.

What a discovery, I thought, I had made for my country! With our initiative, what might we not do, once the laws that must be followed to produce the impression of antiquity were thoroughly understood? We would build dilapidated cities in New York State, on the shores of Lake Michigan, or — yes — even in Kansas, beside which Athens (Greece) would seem modern, and Venice but a village of yesterday. Perugia and Avignon would be rarely visited then; instead, tourists from all over the world would throng to America, to admire reverently, and to scribble their names in pencil on the carefully decaying stones of these more convincingly ancient cities. With which patriotic vision I reached the top of the steps.

I would not look down at once, but walked onward, keeping my eyes averted, saving my sensations as a child saves its choicest sweets, until I reached the platform

before the Basilica. Then only I turned to gaze down at the city that unrolled itself beneath me. The first thing I remarked was that, for all the bright May sunshine, a haze hung over Paris, — not a haze that dulled and concealed, but a delicate luminous presence that interpreted and idealized, bringing out what was beautiful and hiding what was ugly in everything it touched, drawing something of the warm softness of the spring sky down about the city, vaguely full of disseminate color, and as little to be deplored as the mist in a picture of Carrière's. We in America — in those parts of it, at least, with which I am familiar — have these warm, radiant hazes only in autumn; but Paris is seldom without them. It is they, perhaps, together with the pale mystery of the Parisian sky, that give her that subtlety of beauty which even Florence lacks.

My eyes wandered over the spectacle beneath me: there were the Madeleine and the Bourse and the Porte Saint-Denis; there



A Little Street near Boulevard St. Germain



in the middle distance was the river, only a curving thread of light now; and there beyond it was the Church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and, scarcely seen, the two towers of Saint-Sulpice. I laughed to myself in joy over the unreality of it all. It did not seem a city of stone and mortar, but the setting for a play; one would have said the third act of "Louise."

"How strange!" I thought, as I stood leaning over the parapet and picking out the tiny effigies of familiar monuments in the scene below, "that by climbing a few stairs I can make the massive Opéra shrink to a toy that I might put in my pocket, and the great Louvre itself dwindle to the size of a child's house of blocks!"

Then suddenly all the clocks of Paris began striking noon, the little cannon boomed faintly from the Eiffel Tower, and I became swiftly conscious of being hungry. I turned away and walked briskly back in the direction I had come, without so much as

ascending the few extra steps to the Basilica of the Sacré Cœur.

"There 's no use going in," I assured myself. " I 've seen it before, and it 's Byzantine without being extravagant, and Romanesque without being bare, and it 's simple and harmonious; but its excellence is too conscious to inspire so much as a suggestion of the awe and the wonder that we feel in the most imperfect church of the Middle Ages. We can do many things to-day better than they have been done before, but we are wrong to build churches: for to build them nobly the deep reverence that is the result of passionate faith is required, and there is no such faith left in the world, — at least not in men intelligent enough to become architects."

Coward! Hypocrite! The constant pose of being finer than one is, is a necessary and admirable condition of one's relations with others; but it becomes shameful maintained with one's self. Why could I not have said:

"No, I will not go in, because I am hungry, and there is not a church in Paris I would go to see when I am hungry except the Sainte-Chapelle, and that not if I was very hungry"?

Oh, for a poet great enough to convince us of the nobility and the glory of eating when we are really hungry! We reserve the splendor of our verse for love; but there is not half the high satisfaction in being in love that there is in dining well after a hard gallop over country roads. I know, for I have tried both. Eating, however, is habitual, good for us, and indispensable, while love is not; and we are all agreed that beauty is to be found only in what is superfluous and harmful. Poets have sometimes touched on the subject, but euphemistically, as though eating were something gross that must in art be treated delicately, like an immoral theme in a London play. Keats, you remember, writes of "candied apple, quince and plum, and gourd with jellies . . . and lucent syrops

tinct with cinnamon . . . manna and dates . . . spiced dainties." I am not sure as to manna, but the rest are all very bad for the digestion. Perhaps it is because it is the worst thing known for the digestion, that we unite in considering love so superlatively poetic.

Arrived for the second time at the Place Pigalle, I entered the cabaret known as the Rat Mort. I was familiar with it already as (in its downstairs room) the least insincere of these *restaurants de nuit*, and liked it in an unenthusiastic way for the attitude of cynical carelessness and irresponsibility that it expressed. I had found it at midnight as good a place to talk, for friends intimate enough to say whatever came into their heads without concern for what that might be, as existed in Montmartre. But I had never seen it by daylight, and I was interested in discovering to what depths of reality a *boite* which held so little of illusion at three in the morning could sink at noon. So I made



Au "Rat Mort"


Paris
AU RAT MORT

my way in, through a babble of voices and the composite odor of many dishes, toward an unoccupied section of the red-plush sofa that bounds the little room, and there, sitting down before one of the little rectangular marble-topped tables to a *table d'hôte* luncheon at two francs fifty, looked about in mild curiosity.

Opposite me, beside the partition which divides the room in two, stood the upright piano which by night is never silent. But it was closed now and at peace, and the chair belonging to the rest of the orchestra had been pushed back against the wall. And, really, when that is said, all is said. The restaurant was full, or nearly so, but the certain coarse charm that one felt in it during the hours between midnight and dawn was gone now, — gone utterly; only the vulgarity was left. The faces clustered about the tables were no longer units making up a whole that somehow pleased me, but just faces, sordid, dull, often grossly marked with the plain

signs of vicious living. It is probable that many of the men were artists; but I was not a schoolgirl to thrill at the mere word, and for most of these the word alone would have an existence. Montmartre is full of cynical daubers, for whom art is not a high calling to be wrestled with Jacob-like, and so subdued to a noble slavery, but a name to cover and excuse their vices and the vagaries of their indolent lives. Some are *ratés*,—the *ratés* who had only a spark of talent and not persistence enough to keep even that alive, who failed miserably as soon as they put brush to canvas, and about whose failure there is nothing splendid; but the greater number are impostors, men of no ability, disguising their lack of the technique that only a long drudgery, of which they were morally incapable, could have given them, as a breaking away from sterile academic forms; taking up with each successive new school of extremists in painting; and doing, in the intervals of leisure that their amusements leave them,

compositionless monstrosities of color that they call the "New Art" and hang in the Salon des Indépendants (where there is no jury).

I do not assert that there are not true artists in Montmartre, young men struggling toward an honest, sane expression of themselves that, when achieved, will some day mean recognition and fame,—only that there are rather more counterfeits here than elsewhere. But as I looked about me now, I could see none who might be the genuine. Here were caricatures enough: hair worn long, baggy velveteen trousers, a haughty shabbiness,—all the traditional symbols of art were present, but displayed with such a lack of enthusiasm, such a jaded effrontery, so clear a consciousness of their being only a make-up, that they were not even amusing. I think I had never felt so oppressive an atmosphere of disillusionment. And it came to me, with a sharp scorn of myself for having been so easily duped, how super-

ficial was the glamour this place held at night. I have touched the truth already; — the piano was closed now, and the chair belonging to the rest of the orchestra had been pushed back against the wall.

As I sat over my excellent luncheon at two-francs-fifty, I meditated on the delusion of bohemianism. If bohemianism is taken to mean the ignoring of useless conventions, then every man with mind enough to have a philosophy of life is bohemian, the true aristocrat as much as the needy author, — perhaps even more satisfactorily so: for the aristocrat discards only those dull and antiquated forms that clog the daily flow of existence, retaining the many that render it easier and pleasanter, while the author, less civilized, is apt to discard good and bad alike. If this were all bohemianism meant, who would not be a bohemian? But so moderate a conception of the word is far from the sense in which it is usually taken, and I suggest it only because there is no name for



On Ile de la Cité



this state of mind, and because it is what I should like bohemianism to mean.

Bohemianism, however, as it is attempted by young artists, or more perfectly conceived by the Philistine (who is at bottom the most sentimental of creatures), stands vaguely for a radiant manner of life, the concomitants of which are poverty, ideals, ambitions, and an ignorance of money entailing a certain pleasant dishonesty in dealing with shopkeepers. The word has to the popular mind a kind of enchantment; it stands for what is left of romance. An existence fulfilling these requirements seems to us, for those fortunate ones who can lead it, an emancipation from weary formalities and rules of conduct.

Error! Error! Error! There is no such thing as liberty. You can free yourself from one set of laws only by establishing another. Bohemianism is an artificial state. The bohemian need not be logical; no, but he must be illogical. He is not obliged to think of

money; but he is obliged by all the rules of the order not to think of it. Three or four boys live in common, and every one does what he pleases; but this is because the others know beforehand what he will do,—or, at least, what he will not do. I remember to have passed an evening once in the studio of a woman in "the Quarter," and to have asked, with no intent to offend, where I might put the ashes of my cigarette.

"Oh," she said reproachfully, "throw them on the floor, of course! We're bohemian, you know."

And I felt suddenly that my manners had been deficient, and that conventions here were, for being inverted, no less rigorous than in a fashionable apartment at Neuilly. The woman was, of course, a counterfeit bohemian, but it is in caricatures that one most readily sees the truth.

I do not assert that bohemianism does not exist; I think, indeed, that it does sometimes, very delightfully. But I do assert that,

whether attained or only played at, it is an artificial state. And, after all, even at its best, what charm has bohemianism but the charm of friendship? That a group of light-hearted young men should live in common, relieving the temporary poverty of one, or profiting by the prosperity of another, of their number, — this is external, merely an expression of the loyal, affectionate intimacy that unites them. In every quarter of the world, I am sure, there are little circles of friends whose outlook on life is as buoyant, and whose devotion to one another as warm and generous. Is there any less charm in their relations because they do not live in common, are not obliged to share one another's belongings, and happen not to be poor? Popularly, yes. A certain mist of romance envelops friendship only when it has these accompaniments.

It was in searching my mind for the occasion of so curious a paradox that I came, as I thought, to an understanding of the true

nature of bohemianism. Until now I had been groping, aware that I had not reached the heart of the subject; but now I understood: bohemianism was a literary ideal. The word "romance" should have given me the clue before; for romance is always literary. In American cities romance is popularly supposed to exist in the country, because the inhabitants of the cities have seen "The Old Homestead" or read "David Harum." In the North romance is supposed to exist in the South, because northerners have read "Colonel Carter" or seen "In Old Kentucky." So with bohemianism: there is a halo about its hand-to-mouth existence, because we have read of it in the glowing pages of Murger's "La Vie de Bohème"; there is a splendor in its poverty, because we have seen it transfigured in Puccini's opera. And those who have not seen or read fall easily into the mood of those who have. The poverty of bohemianism as it is dreamed of is a literary poverty, its haphazard existence a

literary one. It is of these delusions that the cult is made; for friendship and optimism, — all that is real, all that gives a charm to actual bohemianism, — there is no enthusiasm.

I have a friend who objects to "La Vie de Bohème" as it is produced at the Opéra Comique, because, he says, there is too much ostentation in the poverty, too much luxury in the squalor. He is wrong. There should be luxury and ostentation. This bohemianism is literary. There is no glamour about real poverty; it is bitter and hard to endure. The close common existence, in a two-room apartment or a studio, of three or four young men honestly striving to achieve something creative, is cramping to each: for each is an individualist, or this is not true bohemianism. Those families are the happiest, and the only ones with an *esprit de corps*, in which the right of each member to be alone when he pleases, and to have unquestioned his separate interests, is con-

ceded. No friends can be constantly together day after day without undergoing a revulsion of feeling toward one another; and the closer the intimacy the sharper the reaction. The pressure of personality is deadening and exasperating. It may be one reason for the greater prevalence of wife-murders among the poor than among the rich. No, in actual bohemianism, friendship and optimism do not gain an added lustre from the peculiar conditions under which they exist, but shine in spite of them. They alone are genuinely beautiful; the charm of all the rest is fiction, — *de la littérature.*

The word "disillusionment" no longer means simply having got rid of illusions, but stands to-day for the tired, dull, and unenthusiastic state of mind of one who with his illusions has lost his faith and his interest. And how much disillusionment is caused by the attempt to apply literary ideals to life! That romantic boys and girls should come to Paris expecting to find Mimis and Ru-

dolphes and Musettes in Montmartre or the Quartier Latin, — this is crude, of course: it is like looking for Puss-in-Boots or the Jabberwock; but it is symbolic of what we are all continually doing, even when we know better. Our minds are stocked with literary ideals that we are forever trying to apply to life. Literary friendship, literary love, literary heroes and villains, — we go hunting them up and down; and when we have found only real friendship, which is too reserved, and real love, which is too human, and neither heroes nor villains anywhere, what can result but disillusionment, unless we have the faculty of self-deceit to convince us that what we have found is what we sought, or intervals of sanity when we see with amusement the absurdity of such a quest, and fall back on our true ideals? For true ideals do not fail one. We never completely realize them, but following them intermittently, as most of us do in these lucid periods, we feel reality grow con-

stantly richer and more significant of them. The man of forty sees touches of beauty everywhere that he could not have seen at twenty.

Reflecting now in one of these lapses from literature, I saw that it was surely not at Montmartre I should find my home. A room or two in a creaking garret with a view of roofs and chimney-pots; weeks of fasting, starred occasionally by nights of riotous luxury; random mistresses lightly taken and as lightly dropped, — I enumerated for the sake of thoroughness the conditions of the life; but I faced them as facts, and they held no enchantment. I might put these things and myself into a book, and make, if I did it well enough, a very pretty unoriginal story; but just as surely as the *I* of the book would be a fictional, adapted, expurgated *I*, so surely would these things be not themselves but their literary counterparts. As reality, they were unattractive, vulgar and a trifle sordid. There may sometimes

be little poetry in wealth; there is none in poverty.

When I had left the restaurant, I wandered for conscience' sake a little longer through these shabby streets, but perfunctorily; and at the Place Clichy I climbed to the *impériale* of one of the motor-buses that ply between that square and the Odéon. To the amateur of sensations these new engines that tear shrieking through once tranquil little streets, scattering passers-by frantically to left and right, and leaving behind them a universal sense of miraculous escape from death, are a joy, combining the excitement of a perilous pastime with the advantage of usefulness; but to the philosopher they are too perturbing. "Now, there is a house," he says to himself, "that is an excellent example of its epoch. It would be interesting to note whether over the door —"; but the house is gone. "Strange that for so many years that monument should have remained —"; but a sharp turning of a corner throws him panting

against the rail of safety, and his thought is forever lost to the world.

A thousand objects of interest flashed swiftly into sight and as swiftly disappeared as we rushed noisily down the hill from Montmartre; but though I looked back regretfully, I kept my seat. A man whose mind is both inconsequential and reflective must sometimes take motor-buses in Paris, or he would never get anywhere. A moment's stop on the Boulevard des Italiens and we swept into the rue de Richelieu, formerly a peaceful meditative street, rendered intolerable and ridiculous now by the tumultuous passage of these new monsters. The street has the air of a venerable white-haired man gone suddenly and boisterously mad. All that should normally have lent it dignity, — the vast National Library Building, the allegorical Fontaine de Richelieu, — only serves to heighten its present absurdity. Alone the statue of Molière seems still appropriate. The great humorist would have loved this incongruity of



Old Passage, Palais Royal


LE RAPOLIN
LE RAPOLIN
D'AFFICHAGE
DE VALETS
ROUGE
ROUGE

aspect and behavior; while as to the memories so rudely disregarded, he always cared less for such things than for living humanity; and the rue de Richelieu is very human.

At the farthest corner of the Palais Royal we paused for an instant — if one may call this panting, roaring, vibrating absence of motion a pause — to permit a new inrush of passengers, and I let my eyes wander pleasantly over the familiar unpretentious architecture of the Comédie Française. For some years already the preëminence of this oldest among Parisian play-houses has been but a tradition. So far as I am concerned, there are at least four other theatres I had rather frequent than the Française, which, under the too civilized academic direction of Monsieur Claretie, has become a splendid mausoleum of art, where a glacial perfection of detail in acting has supplanted the genuine portrayal of emotions, and where one may go to see an admirable modern drama and come away, as I did from the "Amoureuse" of George

de Porto-Riche, convinced of having witnessed a very stupid piece. But so much of its splendid past still clings about the Comédie Francaise that one is unable to gaze at it without a real affection.

I dropped my eyes, as the bus lurched forward again, to the graceful statue of de Musset and his muse that occupies the corner in front of the theatre. "It is very delicate and beautiful," I reflected, "but with rather too personal and intimate a charm for its situation. Set thus in a public square it is like a Mozart quartet . . . played in a vast . . . concert-hall."

"There!" I said, shaking my fist at the motor-bus,—shaking it figuratively, that is to say; actually I was clinging with both hands to the seat,—"I did finish that thought in spite of you!" But the motor-bus only rattled callously on, into the noble court of the Louvre, out again on the other side, and across the Seine by the Pont du Carrousel to the Quai Voltaire. Here, having somehow descended the perilous narrow stairs from

the *impériale* to the ground, I left the bus — which promptly roared itself, with a final diminuendo of hoots, out of my life — and turned by the rue des Saints-Pères and the rue de Verneuil into the old and aristocratic quarter known as the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

One of the most delightful characteristics of Paris is the great variety it offers. Most cities are divided into sections that are respectively rich or poor, banal or brilliant, picturesque or dull; but in Paris every *quartier* has its peculiar individuality, which no external resemblance of conformation or architecture can make it share with another. The district of narrow involved streets about the Panthéon is as different in character from the Ile de la Cité, as the Ile de la Cité from the Boulevard des Italiens, and the Boulevard des Italiens as different from the Boulevard Sebastopol as any one of them is from the Champs Elysées. Among them all the most distinctively individual is the Faubourg Saint-

Germain. It seems, like Poe's "House of Usher," to have a physical atmosphere of its own with which the wanderer in the quarter feels himself enveloped and penetrated, as with dampness or cold. There had been no reverence in my admiration for the luxury of the Boulevard Maillot, no deference in my attitude toward the poverty of Montmartre; but here I felt suddenly humbled and inferior. I despised myself for the sensation, but through no effort of will or reason could I throw it off. I was like the honest citizen in the galleries of Versailles, who keeps on his hat and hums an air in an attempt to look at ease, but who grows with every step more painfully conscious of being out of place. The silent austerity of the rue de Lille and the rue de Verneuil held for me a profounder impression of age than the street of steps at Montmartre; for here the impression was not, as there, dependent on the real or seeming antiquity of the houses, but on the past that, even if they had been built only a few

Court of the Louvre


PARIS

years ago, — as some of them doubtless were, — they symbolized; a past splendid but crushing, intoxicating but hopelessly aloof. A child reading a fairy-tale becomes the prince, a man reconstructing in his fancy scenes from a vanished epoch of history sees himself an actor in them; yet, though I pictured to myself, so vividly that my heart beat faster, this quarter as it must have been a century and a half ago: the gardens that swept then from the houses clear to the river, and how they would have looked on the afternoon of some forgotten May, filled with idle lords and gracious ladies, — the Court being perhaps at Paris for a few days, — I could not imagine myself a part of the gay rout, but only an outsider pressing my forehead hungrily against a grating in the effort to get a glimpse of the Pompadour, and struggling for my place among the *canaille* who fought together, hummed snatches of uncomplimentary songs apropos of the king's having taken a mistress who was born a *bourgeoise*, and were beaten

away from time to time by contemptuous lackeys. It was the same with the present. In my search for a home the Faubourg Saint-Germain was the only quarter in Paris to the life of which I could not even fancy myself as belonging. Strange how insurmountable seem the barriers of caste which men themselves set up, and how much more insignificant we feel before the artificial superiority of aristocracy than before the real superiority of genius! I could unblushingly imagine meeting Shakespeare, yet I could not project myself mentally into either the past or the present of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

The thought of its sombre present held me, however, as I walked along the gray silent streets where my footsteps resounded as in a corridor. I knew that the walled-in, imposing exterior of every other one of these mansions was like the expressionless face of the proud man who is suffering. Behind the heavy doors there would be bare lofty salons, cold even in summer, only one

of which would there be any attempt to heat — and that but scantily with a meagre careful fire — in winter. The life within would be very simple and not without its charm; for in these houses the privileges which under the old régime were accepted as a matter of course, have become, now that they are irrevocably lost, passionate tenets of faith. Apart from that degenerate fortune-hunting fraction by which alone we Americans know the titled classes of France, — but which one need not consider, since it almost invariably dies out in the generation following the one that sees its decay, — the remnant of the old nobility in Paris lives with a rigorous simplicity of manners undiscoverable elsewhere. Things have been turned topsy-turvy in more ways than one. This caste, which in the eighteenth century was composed of skeptics crediting nothing and accepting the conventions of Catholicism off-hand merely as among the polite forms to which a gentleman must

acquiesce, is in the twentieth century the only one with an earnest faith in religion; whereas the great middle class, which then accepted all it was told, now (this is true of Paris, not of the provinces) believes in nothing. The *bourgeoisie* has lost convictions; the aristocracy has gained them. Behind the walls of the residences in the rue Saint Dominique and the rue de l'Université there would be a life nearly as austere as that of ancient Rome. But despite its rigidity it held a fascination for me. A lost cause has always a certain charm; and the cause of French aristocracy is so hopelessly lost that devotion to it holds the beauty of a young girl's utopian dreams. What furious idealism it must demand for one to speak with a reverent inclination of the head and a hushed voice of the gross, petty, and commonplace man who represents the House of Orléans!

I do not think that, had I been able to imagine myself a part of it, I should

In the Faubourg St. Germain

In the Faubourg St. Germain



have liked the life of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. There would have been too many things I must not do, too little liberty of thought, too many opinions handed to me ready-made for acceptance, too artificially sharp a distinction between right and wrong, too firm a belief in one standard of morality for all men, — in short, too little chance for individualism. Anatole France would not be read here, nor spoken of except bitterly. That would be hard. I do not think I should have liked the life, — but I shall never know.

The Boulevard Saint-Germain cuts diagonally through the centre of the faubourg. I had crossed it twice in wandering about the quarter, but on a third encounter I turned into it and so away from the life of which I was not a part. The Boulevard Saint-Germain is not like other boulevards. For all its animation, there is about it — at least about the part that lies between the river and the rue des Saints-Pères, — an air of discreet respectability. If it could talk, it would

speak in low tones, enunciating distinctly. It is not itself aristocratic, but it is like a tradesman who all his life has dealt with aristocracy and acquired something of its deportment. I walked along it with slow steps in the direction of the Quartier Latin, looking up at the walls which at this hour turned from gray to soft brown, and the windows that shone golden in the slanting sunlight. The tingling exhilaration of the morning was gone; but there was a different charm in the placid warmth of the spring afternoon, no less sweet for the touch of melancholy one felt in it. It may be that age, which seems to me now so bitter, unfair and impotent an end, holds for him who has reached it a similar reminiscent beauty that he would not exchange for the radiant buoyancy of youth. But I am not sure. The little old man with a skull-cap who lives alone in the apartment opposite mine at Passy, who knocks timidly at my door sometimes and comes in for a few minutes to

smoke a cigarette or two, told me once, with a wistful smile, that he understood Faust's selling his soul to the devil to be young again.

With the mood of this gentle spring afternoon the bustling life of the Quartier Latin would have been out of keeping, so I left the boulevard opposite the old church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and turned after five minutes more of wandering into one of the little streets leading from the Place Saint-Sulpice to the Luxembourg Gardens. It was very narrow, scarcely wider than an alley, and despite the low hum that reached it from the great square I had just quitted, more reposeful than the quieter streets of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; for in it one felt immediately at his ease. The eccentricities of its architecture showed that its past had been too varied to have become a cult for its present. Midway in its brief course I stopped for a more leisurely contemplation of the democratic incongruity in the buildings

opposite. Between a vast barn-like structure that I could not classify, and a hybrid three-story affair crowned with a studio, was a diminutive faded house, covered with delicate ornamentation, and dating surely from the Renaissance, — dilapidated but coquettish still, like some little old lady of seventy who, yet youthful in spirit, should retain the mincing graces of seventeen.

On my own side a high wall ran nearly the whole length of the street. Anywhere else I should have known logically what it concealed, but here in this anomalous street and this indeterminate quarter that was in theory the Quartier Latin, and yet not it nor definitely any other in spirit, there was no telling, — a convent perhaps, or a school, or anything else. Just ahead there was a high gate in the wall; but this did not help me, for its bars were covered with sheet-iron to a point at least a foot above my head. I was in truth only mildly curious, and content to stand here for a moment, sniffing at the per-

fume of lilacs that came to me from what direction I did not know. But it was this pause that brought the keenest enjoyment of the whole day to me and some measure of success to my search; for as I stood there the gate in the wall opened and a woman came out. I saw then whence the perfume had come; for she wore a great bunch of the fragrant blue flowers at her belt. She passed quite close to me, with rapid youthful steps, and as she did so raised her eyes to mine in one swift glance, and as quickly dropped them. They were, I observed, a deep blue in color. I do not know why I noticed this, — probably because they harmonized so well with the lilacs she carried. There is, I assure you, no romance connected with the personality of the young woman. She turned the corner at the Place Saint-Sulpice and I never saw her again. But she was of importance to me nevertheless; for in passing out she had left the gate in the wall open, — oh, the merest crack, but

enough so that by bringing my eyes very close (and perhaps by pushing the iron door just a trifle farther inward), I could see something of what lay beyond the wall.

Set far back in the enclosure rose a great house, — how large I could not tell, since the inadequacy of the opening through which I gazed permitted me only a narrow restricted view ; for all I know, the house may have stretched out indefinitely in either direction. The walls, in the patches that showed near the high roof, were a soft gray in tone ; everywhere else they were concealed by a mass of sunny green ivy, across which rippled waves of shadow in the afternoon breeze. From the foot of the tall quaintly-carved double-door, sheltered above by one of those overhanging *marquises* that lend a dignified charm to the most banal entrances, three worn granite steps descended to the garden, which filled the wide space between the gate and the house, and continued to left and right, — how far, I could

only guess. It was formal, as small gardens should be; but in its well-balanced flower-beds there was such a tangle of roses, such a confusion of lilac-bushes, that its conventionality did not in the least affect its naturalness, and was no more to be regretted than good manners in a woman. Just at the limit of my vision on either side rose a small carved pillar, supporting a marble jar from which slender vines trailed downward with a delicate irregular grace; and, as I looked, these two columns took on to my imagination the aspect of guardians refusing me admittance to the paradises beyond them. I longed to push the gate farther for a wider view, but to have done so would, I was sure, have brought down a wrathful gardener to close it with a slam, and so take away what I already possessed.

It seemed to me, as I stood gazing and drawing deep breaths of the fragrance the white and purple lilacs wafted to me, that I had known this place a long time. It was

less as though it were the house I should choose, than one that had always been mine. What kind of people, I wondered, lived within the ivy-covered walls and wandered at morning through the pleasant paths of the garden? I was puzzled, and the next moment after glad to have been so. That was it,—they would not be of a kind, but unclassified, like the house, the garden, and the quarter itself; people with a few aristocrats among their ancestors, to give them the horror of vulgarity, and that rare gentle distinction of manner which cannot be acquired, but with a preponderance of honest *bourgeois* to keep these things only the leaven they should be; with just enough money to save their aristocracy from absurdity, and not enough to permit of their *bourgeoisie's* becoming pompous. The longer I looked, the surer I grew that people of ideas must live in this place; and the only people who can have more than the mere beginning of ideas (which they either do not know how, or are

afraid, to follow to a conclusion) are those who belong definitely to no caste; for the characteristics of caste are prejudices, conventions, and convictions; and ideas that have grown up amid such surroundings are warped and stunted indeed.

About this garden there was a charm which was not merely that of gardens in general, but something fresh and personal. I felt no jealousy of the people who lived here. If they were what I imagined them, I was glad of their presence. But it seemed unjust that I could not see the wings of the house, or what of garden lay beyond the two columns with their pots of trailing ferns. After all it was my house and my garden,—not materially, it is true, but in the finer sense that a thought in a book, or a sudden mood in the music of a symphony, touching something identical in my own nature, is mine.

Then all at once I understood. (Dullard! to have been so long about it!) It was just

this incompleteness that made the whole magic of the place. It is the bungling writer who describes his heroine; the wise novelist says only that she was beautiful. In all the world there was not a garden so lovely as that my fancy created out of the fragment given me. Not for the certainty that no irate gardener existed, would I have pushed the gate wider open now. This should be my house and my garden, but as they were, — withdrawn, only half-seen. And I reflected, as I turned away, that in their feminine elusiveness Paris herself was symbolized. For Paris is like a woman one loves and who loves in return, prodigal of her affection, lavishing a thousand tendernesses upon her lover, but always with her reticences, her hidden depths of soul of which one gets only wonderful glimpses now and again. Like a woman, she never gives herself completely: she loves always less than she is loved; — it is the secret of her charm.



At La Gaîté

Two Plays



IV

Two Plays

BEING, for some reason which I forget, in the rue Blanche at half-past eight of a rainy evening, I stopped across the street from the Théâtre Réjane, my eye caught by the electric sign that glowed softly through the mist. A long line of dripping carriages was moving slowly by, with intermittent stops before the door. Men, neutrally proper in glossy hats and gray-caped coats, stepped from them, and delicately gowned women descended with the pretty gathering of skirts and well-bred air of contempt for the weather, which make one wish all theatre nights wet. I am continually amazed at the grace with which women get out of carriages, at their almost universal ability to

assume that slight haughtiness, that pleasant sophistication, which raise the act to an art. Most of those whom I was watching I recognized as pretenders, members of the enormous class who pass their time in making believe, in trying to convince the casual observer in the street that they are of the *vrai monde*. And yet I am not sure that it was not they who did it the best. Acting, after all, is more effective than reality.

I hesitated, but the thought that I had never seen Madame Simone decided me. Madame Simone le Bargy she had been until recently, wife of the eminent actor who sets the fashion for Paris in cravats. (There would be sadness in the reflection that it is to an actor — even though he be of the Comédie Française — that Paris goes now for so important a service, if the individual did not vanish before the principle. The idea of one man's being felt to dictate a mode for London or New York is unimaginable. Such a thing is possible only here; and it is



Entrance to a "Bal"


ZAZA

the symbol of a unity, an almost family feeling, a kind of splendid narrowness, which makes Paris a village in sentiment, and gives a homogeneity even to its literature.) Monsieur le Bargy — why, I do not remember, but doubtless for the best of reasons — divorced his wife, upon which she brought suit to be allowed still to carry her married name, on the ground that it was she at least as much as her husband who had made it famous, and that to deprive her of what she had herself rendered of value was unjust. It was a novel point of view, and made Paris smile; but legally it did not prevail, and she lost her suit. For some time she appeared in the programs as "Madame Simone, *ex* le Bargy"; but eventually that also was refused her, and she became plain Madame Simone.

Within, the warmth and light of the theatre, the most beautiful in Paris, greeted me pleasantly, and I settled comfortably into the seat which the rainy night, or perhaps the

fact that the season was nearing its close, had left me without difficulty of obtaining. The play was "La Rafale" of Bernstein, false and morbid like the rest of that author's dramas, but constructed with a skill and certainty that made one put aside his disapproval to admire the art of the work.

It is not, however, with "La Rafale" that I am concerned here, but with the curtain-raiser. It bore the biblical title of "La Fille de Jephté," and it dealt with a young wife who, by the force of her innocence and girlishness, reclaimed her husband from the clever and experienced woman of the world, his mistress before his marriage, in the end utterly vanquishing her redoubtable rival. Further details I will spare you. There are two kinds of plays that are worth seeing,—the very good and the very bad. All others leave one with the sense of a wasted evening; but it is seldom that one sits through the three hours of a very good or a very bad play without feeling germinating in his mind

general ideas which will haunt him for days, until, followed to their conclusion, they are laid aside,—not forgotten, but become, right or wrong, a part of the conception one makes for himself of life. I think I had never seen anything so bad as "La Fille de Jephté." Not that it was vicious; on the contrary it fairly oozed virtue. But to me at least it stood splendidly for all that is worst in the French theatre. For the fact of its immense superiority to ours and the English theatre cannot blind one to the recognition that the French theatre too has its faults and commits its grave offences. But faults and offences are involved so speciously in the flawless technique, are dressed in such an iridescent panoply of wit, that one might long feel them only in a vague discontent without such keys as "La Fille de Jephté." The wit of the curtain-raiser at the Théâtre Réjane was not keen nor its technique dazzling, and I saw in the excessive sweetness of the emotions so freely expressed what had before eluded my

definition, the great fault of the French theatre, — sentimentality.

Mr. Locke, in his delightful book "The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne," observes that we have the richest language in the world, and use it as though it were the poorest. It is perhaps no more than a corollary to add that it is also the most precise and used as the vaguest. The beautiful lucidity of French prose is not due so much to the language itself as to the mastery with which it is handled. Our own language can express with precision fine shades of meaning for which French is quite without an equivalent; but we are unworthy of our riches. We are unskilled workmen, puttering clumsily with a complicated and delicate machine, of whose possibilities we have only a dim conception. One of the most vivid examples of the strange confusion into which we are always falling is our lack of appreciation of the distinction between the words "sentiment" and "sentimentality." There are even people who use "sen-

timentality" as though it meant merely the excess of sentiment. And yet the distinction is as sharp as that between beauty and ugliness. Sentimentality is simply false sentiment. Sentiment is the highest thing that exists, sentimentality the basest; and the failure to separate the two forces clearly in one's mind means misconception of a thousand things in experience, — more than that, it means failure to understand one's self.

A man of sentimentality is a sentimentalist, but a man of sentiment has no name. Sentiment is the highest thing in his life, and as much as he can he keeps it from sight. It is not something he can turn on or off at will, like sentimentality. He is not proud of it, for it does not even belong to him; on the contrary, he belongs to it. It grips him and shakes him when he least expects it. He does not take pleasure in it: every touch of it is pain. (And indeed it is safe to say that, whenever we find ourselves enjoying an emotion,

we may make up our minds that it is not sentiment but sentimentality.) The attitude of the sentimentalist toward his sentimentality is very different. He talks about it freely; he nurses it, and ministers to it as though it were a child; and when he finds that it has added an inch or two to its stature, he sheds tears of joy. It exists not in spite of himself, but for himself. It is his greatest pleasure, — and all the time he parades it as sentiment.

I might continue, and should no doubt, were I not uneasily conscious that the division of the world into men of sentiment and sentimentalists was artificial and only made for the sake of clearness. The world is not in truth so arbitrarily or simply divided, any more than it is divided into heroes and villains, — as we love to imagine from time to time over a fairy-tale. There is in every man some sentiment and some sentimentality. As the one develops, the other diminishes; but even in the man of profoundest emotions

there is always at least a possibility of false sentiment, and even the creator of Little Nell had many moments of genuine feeling. It is for this reason that I said we must understand well the distinction between sentiment and sentimentality to understand ourselves.

From this reason too comes the difficulty of disentangling the thread of sentimentality in a clever French play. The false feeling so skilfully involved in the rapid dialogue of passing scenes appeals to the alloy in our own natures as insidiously as the dash of rum in a glass of punch to the palate of a total abstainer. A "Fille de Jephté" is necessary to make clear the depths of our turpitude. For it is turpitude; the name is none too black. One has only to consider how lofty is the religious sense, to become aware how base is its simulation; how painfully high and pure is the pity that sweeps over us at times, — so rarely, — to appreciate how ignoble and egotistic is the imitation in

which we indulge ourselves — so often. Real pity, as it is the deepest, is the most painful emotion we are capable of experiencing; mock pity is but an agreeable form of self-flattery. We linger with a delicious sadness over Sterne's soliloquy on the dead ass; but there is no pleasure to be felt from the scene in which Lear wakes and recognizes Cordelia. It tears mercilessly at our profoundest passion. I think the reason that the greatest masterpiece of drama is seldom seen on the stage is less that, as is averred, there is no one great enough to act it, than that people do not care to feel so genuinely. We reproach our Puritan ancestors with having been ashamed of their emotions, and it was an unlovely trait, — for genuine emotions are the only things of which one has the certain right not to be ashamed; but may it not have been with them in part the instinctive horror of falling into false sentiment? They were so unswervingly honest, our ancestors. We, their descendants, are born into a dif-

ferent world, a world less straightforward, more complex, where we no longer know what we believe, where right and wrong are tangled hopelessly, where we cannot always distinguish truth from falsehood even in ourselves, where only beauty and ugliness are still sharply separated; which is perhaps why — but that I must leave for another essay.

To the last ten minutes of the young wife's triumphant progress I paid but a mechanical attention. Scenes from other plays were passing across my mind. This situation which had pleased me but left me troubled, that conversation which even in touching an emotion had given me a confused sense of uneasiness, — their falsity fairly sprang out at me in this moment. And the longer I reflected, the more profoundly it seemed to me that sentimentality pervaded the French theatre. False feeling, besides being more agreeable, is far easier of arousing than real sentiment. There are a hundred little tricks a

dramatist knows, — tricks of climax, tricks of repetition, — that make one catch one's breath, despite one's understanding them. I have many times felt tears rise quickly to my eyes at some sudden, skilful, and unexpected turn in a play, though all the time I was in truth as calm and unmoved as I am at this moment. By striking one's knee one can cause an involuntary motion of the leg; so by pulling certain mental strings in his audience, a playwright can bring forth laughter which has no gayety behind it, and tears which have no sadness. Sentimentality, too, in which broad effects are possible, is so much more dramatically effective than sentiment, that it is perhaps logical that the dramatist, for whom effect is so essential, should use it freely. But his sin is none the less for all that. There are, of course, serious contemporary French plays, such as "Amants" of Maurice Donnay, which are without a taint of sentimentality; but in general it is in the lighter, gayer plays —



Street of the Little Butcher Shop



plays like "Sa Sœur" of Tristan Bernard, or the delightful "Miquette et Sa Mère" of Caillavet and Robert de Flers — that one feels an untroubled and unqualified enthusiasm for the French theatre.

Very different from "La Fille de Jephté," yet throwing almost as much light on another side of the same subject, was a play which I saw a few nights later, in company with a charming French family. Considered retrospectively, our choice of a theatre is a mystery; but there are certain rare evenings when the inconsequential is the logical, and at the time I remember that there seemed nothing strange, after failing to get seats for the Variétés, in our driving quite as a matter of course to the Folies-Dramatiques. The Folies-Dramatiques is what would be called in America "The Home of Melodrama"; and as we entered, the first act of "Les Exploits d'un Titi Parisien" was drawing to a throbbing close. I looked about in delight. The house, crowded except for the boxes,

was breathless ; and the uppermost gallery, with the silent unreality of its mottled, dimly-seen background growing more distinct farther forward, and overflowing at the railing into sharply outlined elbows and intense, straining faces, gave one the effect of a cyclorama. There was no *claque* needed here. The applause came sharp and crisp at each noble speech of the hero.

He was an honest workman, the hero, and he loved (oh, but really loved,—only think of it, Messieurs Bourget and Prévost, — without once asking himself, "Do I in truth love?" or "How do I love?") a *midinette*, a little Parisian seamstress, who returned his affection. But she was a woman and weak. Armand Lafontaine, the defaulting cashier of a mill, who also loved her unhesitatingly, offered passionately to share his riches with her, — an offer that she, dazzled with the dream of luxury and ignorant of the source of his wealth, was not strong enough to resist. Deserting her fiancé, she fled with the

villain to England. How Petit-Louis, the hero (described in the programme as *jeune et brave ouvrier*), with Grand-Jean (*son ami dévoué*), followed them across the Channel; how he was taken under the protection of Lord Richard, an English nobleman, for a service rendered to the latter's daughter, Miss Hellen (spelling unrevised); how he escaped the plots of assassination directed against him; how he carried Suzette back to France; how the villain, with an uncalculating depth of passion that I could not but admire, followed her at the risk of his liberty, and implored her to return to him; how, spurned scornfully, he would have murdered her had it not been for Grand-Jean, who arrived at just the right moment; and how the railing of the balcony on which the two men were struggling, gave way, and the unhappy cashier was precipitated into the street below,—you may still learn if you will go to the Folies-Dramatiques. It was amusing to observe here, too, naïvely, as in

the boulevard plays ironically, the effect of the *entente cordiale*. The Englishman was no longer *le traître*, but a sort of subsidiary hero.

There are certain truths that no amount of experience can teach us. We should know, for example, that in any but the subtlest comparisons of national character we shall find nine similarities to one difference, and yet it is always differences that we expect. That we should look eagerly for differences is essential; but that we should expect them is stupid, — which I recognized humbly in finding myself surprised that "Les Exploits d'un Titi Parisien" should so closely resemble an American melodrama. The only real distinction, and one greatly to the credit of the French play, was that not a gun was fired, not a bomb exploded, not even a railway train blown up. As in American melodramas of the sort, the morality was impeccable, and might well serve as a reproach to the authors of more fashionable productions. It was even suggested that, despite her week's

sojourn with the villain, the heroine had remained virtuous, but this was not insisted on.

Patience is not a virtue that develops with culture. No audience of the Comédie Française or the Renaissance would have tolerated the soliloquies and reflections on life to which the spectators at the Folies-Dramatiques listened with sympathy and appreciation. "I esteem," said the hero, his up-turned face glowing with inspiration, "I esteem that an honest workman is of greater worth than a dishonest man of wealth!" The house shook with enthusiasm, and indeed one could not but feel that the observation was restrained and conservative.

Obviously this too was sentimentality, and I found myself wondering why I should experience no distaste, but rather a warm kindliness toward it; while for "La Fille de Jephté," not less crude in its way, I had had nothing but disapproval. Was it, I asked myself, simply that the melodrama, with its situations at which I did not thrill and its

grandiloquence at which I could only smile, flattered me into a sense of superiority to this eager unconscious public, who did not smile and who did thrill? Perhaps, in part. One's vanity is always lying in wait for one, and this particular phase—amused tolerance—is so easily aroused. It is responsible for most of the child-literature that flourishes in America (if I had not had "La Fille de Jephté" before my eyes, I should have gone to that to choose an example of the direst sentimentality), and for all of the dialect plays. There was, however, another and I hope profounder reason. Whatever one might think of the nature of the emotions in question, it was beyond doubt that the audience was feeling them sincerely. But it is not an explanation to say that what is sentimentality in one man may be sentiment in another. Sentiment is sentiment, and sentimentality is sentimentality. Who set the standard I do not know; but that there is a standard I cannot an instant doubt.

We are none of us fine enough to distinguish perfectly at all times between the two; but if we are growing emotionally, we are learning day by day to do so more nearly. And so, paradoxical as it may sound, the conclusion to which I found myself forced before the manifest integrity of this audience, was that it is possible to feel false sentiment genuinely.

Grant Allen, in his guide to Florence, tells one sternly that to gain a first superficial impression of Angelico's "Crucifixion" one should stand before the great picture not less than an hour (as a matter of fact it is only the man of rarest emotional sustainment who can look at any work of art for more than fifteen minutes at a time without losing all sense of its beauty); and I shall never forget the vision of two maiden ladies stationed patiently in front of it, guide-book in hand, their eyes wandering vaguely from figure to figure, but dropping furtively from time to time to their watches. Hypocrisy is nowhere

more rampant than among tourists in Italy; and it is with a sense of relief that one remarks the sincere admiration in the faces about a Bernini and the almost ecstatic pleasure in those before a Carlo Dolci. It was before a Carlo Dolci that the two maiden ladies of San Marco should have been, for whatever their age, — and far from me be the impoliteness of a guess, — they were but children æsthetically. There is no escaping it: natural taste is bad, natural feeling is false. A person of untrained emotions will thrill to the mawkishness of Mendelssohn's "Spring Song," and remain unmoved by the splendor of a Mozart sonata not less simple in form; will pass by a Botticelli, to stop before a Greuze.

I remember that as a child no book equalled the "Arabian Nights" in my affections. Such statements as "He struck the ground with his foot, and the earth opened beneath him disclosing a flight of steps," held for me a breathless charm that neither

Hans Andersen nor Grimm could give me; but I am amused, in looking back, to find that the stories that I loved the best were invariably the feeble interpolated ones, — "The Story of the Three Sisters," for example. I know to-day that the tale which was my favorite among all — "Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Pari-Banou" — is weak and insipid beside the splendid march of the "Story of the Third Calendar." Normally, sentimentality is a step towards sentiment. There is nothing sad in liking Guido Reni; the melancholy thought is that one should continue to like him. For the honest sentimentality of a man who is not yet capable of a higher emotion, one should feel respect; it is when, as in so many French plays, sentimentality is refined and a form of self-indulgence for people who are capable of sentiment, that it becomes intolerable.

With the audience at the Folies-Dramatiques I felt a friendly sympathy. But for my chance of freer development and greater

leisure, all this bathos and banality would have been as real to me as to the sailor in the gallery. Nor was the gulf between us so wide or impassable. I was of no different stuff than these people, — neither better nor worse naturally, neither truer nor falser. If I had grown away from them somewhat in sentiment, — as it would have been unpardonable for me not to have done, — there were still a thousand mental fibres binding me to them. "Now," I said to myself over and over during the play, "I should have thrilled with sorrow; here I should have shuddered with apprehension"; and I heard within me faint and distant echoes of those emotions.

A Cocotte

Au Bois



V

Au Bois

MAY, and afternoon — and the Bois de Boulogne!

I am half afraid to go on. There are a thousand things to say, and yet I feel that if I wrote a work in three volumes and said them all, I might look back and think to myself that they were better and more completely said in those first eight words. But perhaps you do not know the Bois; then you will not mind my amusing myself with just a few of the thousand things. Perhaps again you do. If so, two courses of action are open to you: you may close the book at once, or you may read on disapprovingly, and frown, and say to yourself, "He misses the spirit of the place"; which, too, will not be without its charm.

How I came to be in the Bois is so obvious that it does not matter. Where else, unless to the Luxembourg Gardens, could one go on a spring afternoon when the shifting sunlight was as capricious as the breeze, when every horse-chestnut along the Champs Elysées nodded its white plumes, as if saying, "There are a great many more like me a little farther on,—yes, in that direction"; and when even the cloud-shadows that flitted across the Place de l'Etoile made straight for the Porte Dauphine.

Except the step one takes from the rue de Vaugirard into the Luxembourg Gardens, I know of none so enchanted as that by which one leaves Paris at the Porte Dauphine and enters the Bois de Boulogne. One walks out of the city into a fairy tale. It is a French fairy tale. In these courtly woods there is none of that sombre anxious mystery that invests the forest in which Hänsel and Gretel found the witch's gingerbread house, nor the atmosphere of charms and magic enveloping



In the Bois de Boulogne


DANS LE BOIS DE BOULOGNE

that in which Amjed and Assad wandered before they came to the country of the Fire-worshippers. No, the Porte Dauphine is the gateway to one of those well-bred seventeenth-century fairy tales, in which everything is in good taste, where the princes make love to the princesses in the politest, most formal fashion, and beneath which runs a gentle current of satire. But I, for one, am too happy at being able to enter any fairy tale at all to quibble about the kind.

And fairy tale it was, — oh, unmistakably! I knew that, the moment my feet had crossed the threshold. I had known it before; I had known it always, it seemed; yet each time I returned to the Bois the recognition came as something new and surprising, and never so fresh, so convincing, as on this May afternoon. The wide splendidly-curving route de Suresnes was swept with great silent automobiles; along its outer edges carriages rolled by more slowly, and horsemen trotted stylishly. Horsemen, automobiles, carriages and

the ladies in them shading their eyes with pretty little parasols, — outside the iron gates they would be ordinary enough; here they were all under a spell. And on the gravel-walks that border the road, in the interminable line of chairs (to be rented at two sous for an ordinary, four for an arm, — chair) sat miraculous *bourgeois*, and enchanted nurses watching magic babies. Beyond, to right and left, were the woods, dim and cool with sliding shadows, brilliant and warm with green-gold pools of sunshine. A hundred little paths led in, but I waited until the route de Suresnes should have led me farther on before leaving it. There were too many people in the paths here. Not that I wished to avoid them (that would indeed be to miss the spirit of the Bois), but seen thus from without they were so much in keeping, so decorative, that I disliked to approach and destroy the charm. An artist once pointed out to me how, seen by one in a strong light, all colors in half-light fall into "value"; and I have treasured

the knowledge ever since. There was a woman seated in a little glade, her chair against the trunk of an oak. Gown and wide hat and small half-blurred profile, — she was perfect. Seen thus she was radiantly, harmoniously beautiful. I refused to draw nearer.

So, still following the route de Suresnes, I wandered on past the lake with its poplar-clad island. I might have turned off here, for the paths and the glades were less frequented; but I lingered a little longer, content to loaf, — to *flâner*, as the French expressively has it, — and watch the incredibly heterogeneous crowd about me. English, Americans, Turks, guttural-sputtering Germans, with "Remember Sedan" written so unmistakably in their aggressive carriage that I wondered they were not immediately massacred, until I remembered what contempt the Greeks had felt for their conquerors, and understood; — it was a congress of all nations, and yet the whole effect was superlatively French. Just as Rome received wave

after wave of Germanic invasion, changed her victors to vanquished with the spell of herself, and left them Romans or (I cannot help fancying, with the analogy in my mind) would-be Romans, — so to-day does Paris rise supreme and unchangeable above her invaders. Let the Danes and the Germans come; turn in all the hordes of transatlantic barbarians (most of us have already been turned in), wise men or fools, philosophers, poets or libertines, — there is something, good or bad, for every one. Paris is inexhaustible, and always Paris. Those who came with an idea, lose it, but are given a hundred others in return; those who came for no reason at all, find one for not going back; and those who came to scoff, remain to pay, — which serves them right. Having achieved this profound reflection, I found myself standing still and gazing at an excellently placed chair that happened to be empty. I had one second of hesitation, then I dropped into it, feeling in my pocket for the copper which

that hawk-eyed old woman, already approaching with her sheaf of yellow coupons, would exact in the name of the French Republic.

We accuse women of being perverse; yet their perversity is as nothing compared to ours. They are only perverse as to facts (being told to do one thing they do another); but we men are perverse about an idea, about a fancy of our own, simply for the pleasure of it. Consider my case. The woods were more attractive than the route de Suresnes; I intended to go into the woods; I wanted to go into the woods; yet because my mind was made up to go, I found a guilty pleasure in sitting down here and putting it off.

"I will just wait," I said apologetically, "until something happens; then I'll go." *What if nothing did happen?* Impossible. You might as well fear that nothing will happen in a play, that the hero will have no adventures, that the heroine will marry some one else and go to live somewhere off the stage

before the third act. The Bois is just a play. You might as well fear that nothing would happen in a fairy tale. The Bois is a fairy tale, — a seventeenth-century French fairy tale, one of Madame d'Aulnoy's or Monsieur de Caylus's — remember, when you speculate on what kind of thing will happen.

The spring breeze was fresh and imperious. It tumbled the yellow curls of a little four-year-old American boy who was playing near me, and kept his English nurse patting at her unbeautiful coiffure. It ruffled the parasols in the carriages, and annoyed especially one horsewoman who bent her head now and again to meet it as she cantered by. She was a wonderful little creature, *demi mondaine* from the tip of her little American shoe to her mass of bronze hair (like that of the Botticelli Venus) and the tiny man's hat that surmounted it. But *demi mondaine* or duchess, she sat her horse well. So much cannot be said of her cavalier, a gray-haired man of about fifty, who trotted un-

comfortably a hundred feet behind, as though he had been a groom instead of the financier who could have bought his companion three times over, that he probably was. As for her, she rode ahead cruelly, with never a look behind. But only a little way past my chair she raised her head unwarily, and a sharper gust of wind than any yet caught hat and bronze hair, swept them swiftly off, and dropped them limply to the ground. I heard a cry from beside me, and withdrawing my eyes for a moment from the stage, I saw the little boy with the yellow curls standing, his face set, his eyes wide with horror at the spectacle of so much suffering. He raised one hand to his own locks; — they were still safe. A spectator, stepping out, picked up hat and wig, and handed them soberly to the cavalier, who accepted them with imperturbable gravity, and trotted off after his inamorata. (She would wait for him now, I thought.) The last episode was too much for the English nurse, who broke into hearty

British laughter. But the boy turned on her in a flash, his eyes ablaze with anger.

"You muth n't laugh, nurthe!" he cried, stamping his small foot. "It ith n't funny! it ith n't!"

"I should like," I reflected as I rose, "to know that child's mother. She must be the only woman in Paris who wears her own hair; and living in Paris, she would not do that unless it were beautiful."

All manner of paths lead off from the route de Suresnes at this point,—paths that run parallel with the road, diagonal paths, paths that begin to meander before they have gone six rods. I took one that plunged straight in and, like an enchanted flight of steps, led me at once from the brilliant confusion of the highway into a different world, a world of soft, half-audible sounds, of gold light and green shadows. Sometimes through the trees to right or left I would get a swift glimpse of a white gown or catch the murmur of words; but the path itself was quite

deserted. Above, in the sunlight, the top leaves of the elms and maples were like stained glass. There are no other woods so green as the French woods; for in France not alone the foliage of the trees, but their trunks, are green, — a dull moss-color. In one place the path was all in darkness; farther on it was a brook of sunlight, with a long shadow lying across it like a bridge. High up the gusty spring wind caught at the tops of the trees, and set them rustling almost articulately; but here below there was only a futile baby breeze, full of a hundred childish impulses that came to nothing. It tried daintily to blow the shadow away, and failing, danced off to other absurdities.

The path stopped abruptly; but from a little green circle of open ground in which it ended two others led away, to right and left. It occurred to me after a moment's hesitation that, if I walked in turn a little way down each, I should surely find something to direct my choice. The right-hand

path offered a butterfly and a pair of lovers; but I had not gone far along that to the left, when I caught, faint but sweet, the scent of acacias. I hurried on swiftly. I had forgotten: it was mid-May, and the wonderful trees that give the Allée des Acacias its name would be in bloom there and in the woods all about it.

Where the delicate odor was strongest and the blossoms lay thickest, I paused. Everywhere the white petals were drifting slowly down. They were falling all around me; I felt one brush my cheek softly. They had covered the ground with a white foam. It fairly snowed blossoms. And their fragrance hung like a faint mist over everything. As I lifted my head to inhale more profoundly their perfume, I felt the breath suddenly choke in my throat, and my eyes grow hot with tears. I am not ashamed to write of it; for if one is not to feel his eyes wet in the sadness and wistfulness of the perception of perfect beauty, then indeed aspi-

At the Château de Madrid



rations are dead, a Beethoven symphony becomes only an exercise in harmony, and we must weep other and bitter tears at the world's sterility.

But we are all chained by the fundamental materialism of our lives. Our divinest longings we instinctively attempt to express in terms of facts. It is this that makes the step from the sublime to the ridiculous so short and so inevitable. I had never had a moment of truer feeling, of higher reaching out toward the unfettered soul of beauty; and yet (it is right that I should tell you) two seconds later I was trying to express the discontent, which was my helpless struggle to escape from the finite, as a concrete desire.

"One should be in love," I thought, "to appreciate this!"

Do me the credit to believe that the next instant I had turned on myself with scorn. And well I might! Put aside all the stupidity, all the prosaic ignominy of which I had been guilty in so interpreting what I

had felt; take the reflection as just a generalization on a walk beneath flowering trees that had a pretty perfume; and then consider its overwhelming absurdity! One can appreciate nothing when one is in love. One is dazed, self-centred, drunk — with the charm but the dullness of intoxication. No, to appreciate, one must not be in love — one must be free, clear-headed, untrammeled; but — and this is the secret — one must have been in love, and one must feel the possibility of falling in love again.

"You," I said to myself contemptuously, "are unworthy of genuine feeling. Your mind is as earthy as Monsieur Perrichon's, and you had better be off with it to some place that is mundane enough to be within its comprehension, — the Château de Madrid, for example"; and turned my steps sheepishly thither.

"But," you will say, if you have been in the Bois only a few times, "the Château de Madrid is not in the Bois at all; it is across

the Boulevard Richard Wallace from it at the Porte de Madrid." If, on the other hand, you have come to know the splendid Parisian park more intimately, you will for once, I think, nod approval. For as Brookline is to Boston, — that is to say, more essentially Bostonian than Boston itself, — so stands the Château de Madrid in relation to the Bois de Boulogne. It is like one of those models of an ancient city before which one lingers, fascinated, at museums. In the city itself there would have been at any period uncharacteristic monuments, meaningless sticks and stones ; in the model there is nothing that is not significant. So here, all the gracefulness of the Bois, all its unreality, all its prettiness, all its *chic* (if you will permit the word), are gathered up and expressed in this dainty little court which is the Château de Madrid, as a distant landscape is gathered into the finding-glass of a camera. What the Château de Madrid may once have been, or what may formerly have

stood in the exquisite place it occupies, I do not know. To-day it is a restaurant, and its full name is Le Restaurant du Château de Madrid; so I fancy it is called for some vanished palace. Moreover it is not *a* restaurant of the Bois but *the* restaurant. There are numerous others, all crowded at the proper hours in spring and summer; nevertheless, the Château de Madrid is *the* restaurant. Society is fickle. By the time you read this, some other may have its approval, and the Château de Madrid, though seemingly as crowded as ever, be deserted, to one who can discriminate. Only a few years ago Armenonville was supreme, and now who goes to Armenonville? and how odd it seems to be told, in a novel dealing with the polite world, of engagements made for breakfast there! But fashion is a wheel that rotates (I think some one else has said this before me), passing repeatedly the same point; so it may be that if, through some improbable chance, there is any one to read

these words ten years from now, he will smile and acknowledge that there is no restaurant but the Château de Madrid, and *que les autres n'existent pas*.

A short curving drive, bordered with glowing beds of flowers, leads to the archway through which one reaches the gay little court. There are two acceptable manners of entering the Château de Madrid, on foot, or in your own carriage. There is a third way, — by an ordinary taxi-cab. But, though the face of the servant who hastens up is as impassive as ever, and his deference in assisting your lady — if lady you have — to alight, as perfect, there is that in his manner which, added to your own sense of wrongdoing, makes then for your discomfort. I entered on foot.

There is for most people a kind of exhilaration in an environment of elegance. I feel it sometimes in a drawing-room, where perhaps the wit is not keen, and the conversation much less brilliant than in many a dingy

café. I felt it now, as the suave *maître d'hôtel* bowed me to an unoccupied table whence I had an easy view of the whole graceful little scene. The sensation is a puzzling one. It is hardly the titillation of tickled vanity, the effervescence of the consciousness that one is part of a superior world; for it is dependent solely on appearances, and remains no duller or less grateful, when of one's own certain knowledge one can correct the appearances. The questions, "Who were your fathers?" "Had you grandfathers?" never lurk uncomfortably behind it. Indeed it is, I fancy, more readily obtained from a restaurant full of *cocottes* than from a room full of duchesses; since a very old and dowdy woman may be a duchess, while only a young and well-groomed one can be a *cocotte*. The *cocotte* to-day, in her brief butterfly hour of life, sets the fashion, and is supreme in elegance. The comtesse or the marquise, immured in her grim faubourg, has yet, it is true, something else that she

will not bring to the Château de Madrid to profane — the tradition of a nobler vanished elegance (though indeed those long-dead ladies, her relatives, whose portraits as shepherdesses smile down upon her shabby gentility, were only superlative *cocottes* themselves, willing, the most virtuous of them, to sell themselves for the king's favor); but as for the respectable *bourgeoise*, let her sniff as morally as she please, however high her *bourgeoisie*, there will be a touch of envy beneath the disdain with which she regards the elegance of the *cocotte*.

Not half the tables in the little open-air enclosure were taken, for it was not quite the tea-hour yet. But the people were arriving fast. On the other side of the drive that leads into and through the court an orchestra was playing; but though one saw all the pantomime of music, only a sudden crescendo in the strings, or an occasional shrill note from the flute, was audible. The rest was drowned in the rattling of horses' hoofs, the crunching

of the gravel beneath carriage-wheels, and the warning blasts of entering automobiles. It was just as well: I had heard that orchestra on quieter afternoons. There were flowers all about, in masses, in boxes, in pots. The mirrors that lined the entrance-wall, and others tucked in every conceivable corner, glowed with the scarlet reflection of geraniums. The breeze was subsiding (it would play no more tricks that day); but when with its gentle subdued puffs it touched my face, I was conscious of a heady intoxicating odor, the combined fragrance of roses, iris, mignonette, and the different subtle perfumes that the women wore.

The tables were filling swiftly. From carriage after carriage the women descended, light-gowned, dainty, young, — nearly all of them, — (there were men too, but no one looked at them); until in a surprisingly short time, the court was full, and the *maître d'hôtel* spread out his expressive deprecating hands, with a gesture of sorrowful helpless-

An Old Habitué



ness, before the straggling late-comers. A pleasant hum of voices, that was like the diffused radiance of the flowers or the pervasive perfume, filled the enclosure. Daintiness, elegance, the perfection of prettiness, — one got the impression of these things harmoniously through three senses at once. It may not have been an impression of much importance in life; but it was a most agreeable one. Moreover, about no other place that I have seen was there ever a more splendid atmosphere of youth. It set eyes sparkling and tongues babbling. These women — most of them — were *des cigales*, and this was their summer. Heart and soul they threw themselves unreservedly into the present. Who stopped to think of the poor *cigales* of yesterday? Who would croak of the winter to come? Pah! Sermons at a masked ball?

An exquisite fair-haired girl, in a pale blue gown and a wide, slanting, blue-flowered hat, caught me gazing at her, and threw me a swift brilliant smile. It was not that she

fancied me, I knew, but she was pleased at the unguarded admiration in my look, and then — she and I were young, while the man she was with was forty at least. Without him, it is true, or some other like him, she would not have been here nor wearing the pale blue gown; and the great drooping hat would have been reposing in some window on the rue de la Paix. Well, what then? She paid him, did she not? Must she like him into the bargain? Her smiles were her own.

I fell to wondering, as I stared about me, which of the women were the *cocottes* and which the *honnêtes femmes*. Broadly speaking, the former were probably, as I have said, to be distinguished by their greater elegance; but the rule was a bit too sweeping. In the end I concluded that the *cocottes* were those who were eating ices, and the *honnêtes femmes* those who were drinking tea; for the first do as they please, but the second as it is proper to do; and though the English have forced

the custom upon them, the French have never honestly learned to reverence tea.

Sitting alone at a table near mine, where I could watch her without turning my head, was a little *demi-mondaine*. She was very pretty. Her gown and hat were charming, her features behind her light veil were small and fine, and on her cheeks there was just the softest touch of rose, that I should have thought natural if it were not that such creamy complexions are usually colorless. She could not have been more than two or three and twenty. Yet she made a sadly pathetic little figure. It was not that she was alone. The maître d'hotel had shown her especial courtesy, and a man who had been welcomed with a word of respectful recognition by more than one waiter had bowed and stopped for a moment to speak pleasantly with her. Indeed, her being here unaccompanied was rather a sign that her position was established. One goes to the Château de Madrid when one's fortune is made, — not to seek it. I should as soon

have thought of accosting the girl with the middle-aged man as her. Neither did I fancy sentimentally that she was reflecting on cigales and winters. There are many ways of classifying people; but one of the most useful, and perhaps the only universally accurate manner, is of dividing people into those who are and those who make believe. The pretty *demi-mondaine* was of the second category, and her pathos lay in the fact that she felt it. With her irreproachable gown, her well-chosen hat, and her tiny pompous spaniel that lay curled in a chair beside hers, and ate wafers from her hand, she was as complete as any of the others and prettier than most; yet her slender fingers played nervously with the ivory handle of her small fluffy parasol, and her eyes were timid. If she could have understood intellectually that the difference between herself and the rest was not in externals but just in a shabby trick that Nature had played her, she might have learned not to show her consciousness of being a make-

believe. But that consciousness came to her, I was sure, merely as a vague uneasiness. Her life was pure feeling. Reason was at least as foreign to her as to the little spaniel. And after all it may be she would not have made a success had she been different. Her charm, I reflected, lay precisely in her wistfulness. Very likely her life was happier than that of many who were not make-believes. Men are always gentle with such women.

When the tea-hour was over and it was no longer fashionable to remain, I left the restaurant, and again crossing the Boulevard Richard Wallace, reëntered the Bois. The paths were shadowy and very still now, and I wandered peacefully, without thought of direction, from one to another, until as evening began to fall I happened on the Restaurant du Pré Catalan. I dined there agreeably out of doors, while a tolerable orchestra just within played Strauss waltzes and other decorative music. When I had finished, the sun

was long set, and the moon, not yet quite at the full, was high.

I set off again, taking a cab this time, in deference to the tradition that after dark the Bois is unsafe for pedestrians. A moment, and Pré Catalan with its lights and its laughter had vanished like one of those enchanted palaces — scarcely more real indeed — in the "Arabian Nights." The tones of the orchestra were audible for a little while, then they too died away, and there was nothing to break the moonlit silence of the *allée* we followed but the low murmur of leaves overhead, the rhythmic thudding of the horses' hoofs, and the soft whispering sound that the rubber tires of the open carriage made on the ground. I looked for a second at the squat inscrutable figure on the box before me, and wondered what thoughts were in his mind. It has often seemed strange to me that *cochers*, whose opportunities for observation and for solitude are immense and exactly equal, whose very *métier* it is to be alone in the midst of the chang-

ing scene, should become wits rather than philosophers. Perhaps, I thought vaguely, they were witty because when on a *course* they crossed swiftly the path of some *copain*, or when their cab for an instant locked wheels with the wagon of an irate teamster, the moment was too brief for any but terse epigrammatic phrases to tell. True, there was nothing to indicate that they were not philosophers also. But was that probable? Men who were both wits and philosophers could rule Paris. All vocations were open to them; they could succeed in anything. Well, perhaps they knew it, and preferred to remain *cochers*. If they were philosophers they were in pursuit of knowledge; what other profession would offer so much? And as to ruling Paris, it was matter for deliberation whether they did not rule it already.

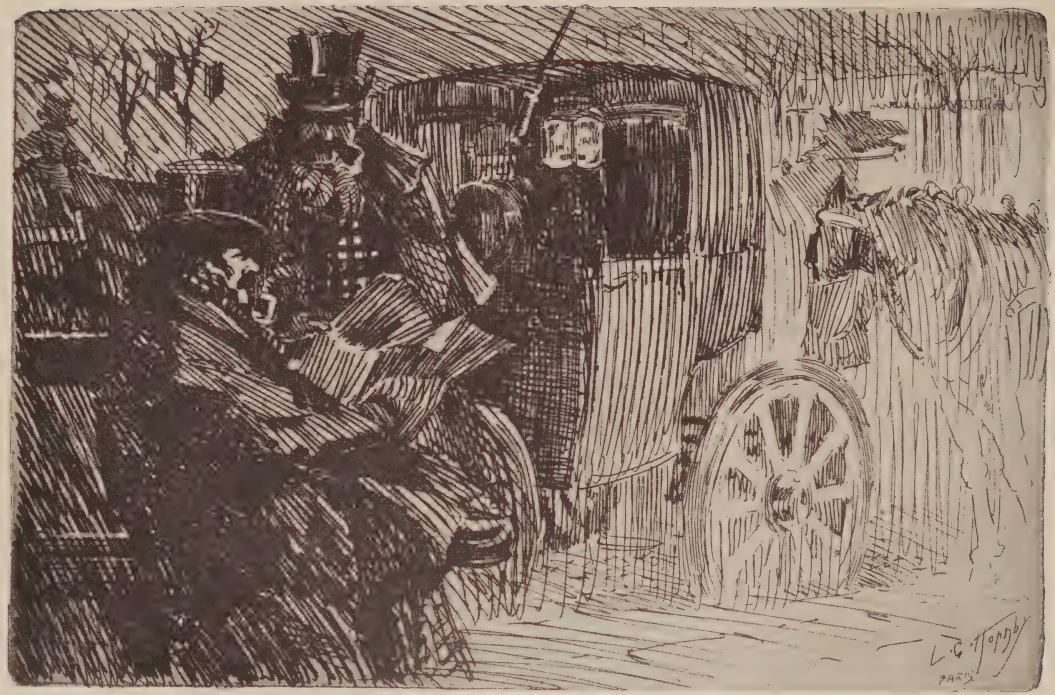
At night, in such a setting of silence and unreality, one's fancy frisks along unimpeded like one's thought in a dream, where there are none of the inhibitions of waking life.

As in the dream, one's deductions are entirely logical and completely absurd because no suggestion of common sense ever enters to modify the initial premise. Asleep, we should follow the idea to such a point of impossibility that when we waken, being unable to remember the steps by which we progressed, we should dismiss the result as sheer vagrant inanity (and this sometimes happens), if it were not that generally, before one train of thought goes very far, something happens — a breath of air touches our cheeks or a sound our ears — to change the current of the dream and establish a new point of departure. In waking life the thought can never be carried so far, since the possibilities for this something to arise are many times more numerous.

So now when we had rounded a curve and I looked up to see Bagatelle a stone's throw away, *cochers* ceased to exist for me. It was no wonder. The little château shone as white and still as the moon herself, while



Cochers



on the terrace before it the shrubbery was a deep blue-black. All about rose the poplars, beautifully grouped by threes and fours that melted together indistinguishably, each group a splendid mass of pale light and luminous darkness, except where, high up, the feathery curving top of one or another emerged and trembled delicately, a blurred shadow against the sky. They would be wonderful by day; but now, at night, they seemed the shivering wings of Beauty herself, poised for a little fugitively upon the earth. If I could only have stayed! If I could have held it! If I could have somehow become part of it! Yet I did not dare even to pause; for I knew that, after a moment, though a tender reverence for the scene would remain, the inspired perception, the acute sense of its loveliness, would be gone; and the regret for what I had lost would be too poignant. What cry is bitterer than Coleridge's, "I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!" Whether it is that before the almost tangi-

ble presence of beauty we ache to merge ourselves, to lose our personality, — and that this would mean death, —

> "Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
> While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
> In such an ecstasy," —

while, in spite of ourselves, the overwhelming instinct of life calls on us to maintain and strengthen our individuality, or whether the reason lies elsewhere, the sad truth is that intense emotion such as we then feel can come but by accident and endure but an instant. The next, the wax melts in the wings that would have carried us out of the world, and we fall, like Icarus, heavily upon ourselves.

> "Forlorn, the very word is like a bell
> To toll me back from thee to my sole self!"

No one has put it better than Keats.

The gleaming château, the moonlit terrace, and the poplars were gone now. "*A la Porte Maillot*," I said to the *cocher*, wearily.

"Ah," I thought, raising my head, "as the black night with stars, so the immense banality of our lives is set with moments of feeling."



Fiacres

Love in Paris



VI

Love in Paris

PEOPLE are wrong to leave Paris in summer. The impression that in that season the city becomes unbearably hot was, I fancy, spread by the English; for unless there is a slight chill about the air and draughts to sit in, the average Englishman begins to mop his forehead and complain of the heat. But to the man born in our country of rigorous extremes, the summer climate of Paris seems gentle and equable. (I have, moreover, rarely found an American who succeeded in being warm enough anywhere in Europe at no matter what time of year.) And Paris in August is worth knowing. If it has lost the sense of freshness and buoyancy it possessed in early spring and has not yet gained the

delicate melancholy of its autumn nor its strange, poignant winter charm, there is, nevertheless, a lavish sleepy beauty about it, more attractive in this period, when one's mind is in abeyance and one lives only through his senses, than would be those subtler moods. The city belongs to one, too, in a way it does not at any other season. The wide boulevards are all but deserted; the Place Vendôme is bare and silent; only a loitering omnibus and perhaps a tenantless cab or two interrupt the perspective of the rue Royale and the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde from the steps of the Madeleine; one may even cross the Champs Elysées without risking his life; all the Paris world is at Trouville, Deauville, or somewhere else. From time to time personally-conducted parties of tourists surge into the town and pause for a day or two in their relentless way across Europe, — Germans with guide-books, spectacles and green hats flaunting each a solitary feather, English (of

that class which likes the heat no more than another, but which has to travel now or not at all) with guide-books and pipes, and Americans with guide-books.[1] But they serve only to heighten one's sense of the city's emptiness — like rats in a vacant house. All this is in the day-time. At night everything is different; for then the workers who have been hidden in shops, *bureaux*, government-offices, pour forth and overflow the streets in which an hour before one could hear the echo of his own footsteps, and fill with the murmur of their voices the gardens that have been silent since morning.

Such is Paris in midsummer, and as such too I have grown to love it. If I go to the shore at all, it is in September, when I can possess unmolested the whole sea for half the price I must have paid to rent in discomfort a small fragment of it two months

[1] Further characterization of my summer-flitting countrymen is impossible. Their heterogeneity is immense and gorgeous. I thank heaven for the guide-books!

earlier. And although no events break its agreeable monotony, a summer in Paris always contains unforgettable days (when one did nothing very particular) that one looks back to affectionately, which, I suppose, is as good a test as another of a season happily spent.

The recollection of one of these from last August is still vivid for me. It began — that is to say, I begin to remember it — at about four in the afternoon, when I stood smoking a cigarette on the little balcony outside my sitting-room, my elbows resting on the iron railing, — for all the world, it occurred to me with pleasant self-deceit, like Chad in "The Ambassadors." Sunlight permeated everything. The river was a dazzling blue; its bridges a warm golden brown. The low hum of mature summer filled the air. It was a drowsy indolent day, and yet — beneath its seeming peacefulness there was to be felt an immense and restless vitality, like that of which one becomes sometimes aware in the

La Lettre d'Amour


LA LETTRE D'AMOUR

lazy feline glance from between the half-closed eyelids of a languorous woman. Its effect on me was strangely to make me feel at once happy and discontented, and (paradoxical as it may sound) as though, if I were more contented, I should be less happy. I wanted something and did not know what. On reflection it seemed that it might be gingerbread with raisins in. When one experiences this desperate baffling desire for something he cannot name (and everyone knows the feeling), it is always a dainty he loved as a child that seems most nearly to approximate the object of his longing; for the simple luxuries of childhood were coupled with sensations more vivid and enchanted than any the most complex pleasures can give us now. As for the object of my own wish, it might as well have been a roc's egg; *pain d'épice* is very unlike gingerbread. Beyond the quay a little *bateau mouche* swept by silently on its way down stream to Suresnes; then another and another,

and I noted with surprise that their decks were black with passengers. It must be Saturday; on the whole I believed it was. And since a large part of the population of Paris seemed to be going down the river, why should not I go too?

There are those whom the proximity of a crowd renders unhappy, who experience distaste for its vulgarity and pain at its ugliness. Unless the revulsion is a pose, they are not to be despised for it (no sincere feeling is despicable), but they are to be pitied. Through this innate or cultivated atrophy of one side of their nature they are cut off from that unity of impression by which an understanding of a city is expressed. They may completely appreciate a Norman landscape; Paris they will never know. For one knows a city in a profound and significant sense, not when one has become familiar with its museums, parks, and ancient streets, —all this serves as little as an acquaintance with anatomy would serve toward a philo-

sophic understanding of man's nature; — but when one has come to feel a great, if vague, good-will, an honest friendly sympathy, and above all, a pity in which there is no condescension for the commonplace unromantic human beings who jostle past him on the city's sidewalks. It is because I have never reached this state of mind in London that the English metropolis remains for me an admitted enigma. The men I have known who confessed to this distaste for the populace were avowedly seekers after beauty, and it was, they averred, the bitter ugliness they saw in the crowd that offended them. Yet, conceding as reasonable such singleness of quest, and acknowledging the emotional sensitiveness to which they all pretend, I find them singularly warped and narrow even in their own specialized department of feeling. There are so many kinds of beauty; it exists everywhere, gleaming out at one often from ugliness itself. Surely the æsthete's life would be richer if he would only see the beauty,

fragmentary as it is, in the common everyday things.

It was the variegated aspect of the deck of the little boat to which I stepped from the Passy landing that started such random thoughts. With my back against the rail I stood and watched the spectacle, — people wedged along the inadequate benches, people in the aisles between, chatting, smoking, crowding against one another and me ; making broad jokes and bursting into roars of laughter over them ; breaking into swift quarrels to which some flash of wit in the remarks bandied hotly back and forth brought swifter reconciliation ; espousing the disputes of others ; soldiers, clerks, shop-keepers, women young and gay, women old and so superlatively ugly that they could be nothing but *ouvreuses* from some theatre, and set one instinctively groping for a fifty-centime piece ; babies with wide curious eyes and sticky mouths ; servant maids, — just people, in short, and at every new landing more people,

their expression changing from tense apprehension, as the boat slowly neared the wharf, to relief and placid self-congratulation, when it had touched and they had struggled aboard. There was not a handsome face to be seen, nor a dainty gown, nor a graceful gesture, —yet there was a homely beauty about it all. What an æsthete would have felt it is difficult to divine, —I am afraid of doing injustice to his point of view; but no one else could have considered this careless, happy, vulgar, holiday multitude without experiencing pleasure at its frank enjoyment and a sympathetic curiosity as to the lives of the individuals who composed it.

Some one (perhaps it was Thackeray) wrote wistfully of what a spectacle of humanity we should have if the roofs of the houses in a city were removed and we could hover above looking down into each. There is a charm about the idea like that investing the magical attributes of the prince in a fairy tale; but after all we should learn from such

a survey little more than we know already. If instead we could see into the minds, now so infinitely removed, of the men and women swarming all about us, — could see the hopes and the doubts, the base desires, the high aspirations, the nobility and the ignominy struggling confusedly in each, — then what a spectacle indeed we should get! Our own minds, I think, would be sweetened and purified by such insight, full of tolerance, and with no room left in the sadness of so immense a knowledge for any emotion except the profound passion of pity which touches us now only rarely and faintly; we should not be men but demi-gods. If you doubt so much, you have only to look into the face of some old Catholic priest of the best type. And yet he, sitting day after day in the confessional, has not learned a tenth of the truth, even as to those penitents who stammer their sins brokenly into his ear.

These reflections pertained to the initial stage of the trip. Afterwards, before we had

even come in sight of the smug ubiquitous statue of Liberty, I fell into the grasp of a different more precise feeling, — a kind of apologetic sense of being out of place, an intruder; for when the inevitable first five minutes of inability to see a crowd of which one is a part, except as a confused whole, only vaguely composed of parts, were over, and I had begun to consider the elements of the scene separately, I found that this multitude did not analyze into individuals but into pairs. The idea seemed, to begin with, so absurdly literary that I fancied I had fallen on exceptions and was generalizing from insufficient material, — a not uncommon fault, — and so abandoned my place at the rail for a wider survey; but before I had made my way curiously half round the deck, I was fairly swamped with proofs. There never was such another truth as that! A philosopher would have turned green at its absoluteness and a grammarian would have died of envy. These people, whether occupying

the benches, resting against the rail, or ebbing to and fro in the space between, were without exception not ones but twos. Every soldier had his *bonne amie*, every clerk his mistress, every shop-keeper his wife. In all the throng the pilot, the man who collects the fares, the engineer, and I were the only individuals.

It did not matter to the other three, doubtless, who had their duties to attend to; but me it filled with a sense of my obtrusiveness that was almost embarrassment. I felt like a chaperon on a picnic. Not for the world would I have annoyed these merry-makers, yet I had to look somewhere, and I saw in growing consternation that I could turn my gaze nowhere except to the river without breaking in upon a flirtation, a love-affair, or a family council. Then, at the very height of my quandary, something kindly happened to set me at ease. On the bench opposite, a young soldier, who was sitting with his arm about a little servant-girl, looked



Le Modèle



up after a whispered confidence (which must have been mischievous; for she had uttered a low giggle of protesting pleasure), caught my eye, saw that I was looking at him, gave me a stare devoid of interest, resentment, or sheepishness, turned back to his mate, and kissed her soberly (behind the ear). There was neither bravado nor defiance of my observation in the act. He simply did not care. Incredible as it seems to an Anglo-Saxon, he did not; neither did any of the other two or three hundred people on that boat. I stared now right and left for fifteen minutes, but I might have been a stuffed cat in a cellar and they sportive mice, for all they minded. It was an instructive quarter of an hour, and as amusing as a story of Courteline's; but at the end of it I turned away with a sudden inexplicable petulance and took to regarding the river. I thought again of gingerbread with raisins in.

The machine-shops and the factories were past now. We had reached the outer edge

of that desolate and sordid circle which makes Paris a jewel set in mud. Where the Seine curves more sharply, we stole in between the islands of Billancourt and Séguin. The river here was as smooth as the sky, only rippling into one soft diagonal fold where the bow of the boat cut it. The tall slim poplars on the Ile Séguin were repeated line for line in the water beneath, but less delicate, less softly green above than below, as an idea of a thing is always lovelier than the thing itself. A silence had fallen upon the deck, but not the silence of reflection and resignation an autumn afternoon would bring. Out of this radiant, perfect, fruitful day there stole to one who looked a sense of vibrant, exultant joy in existence. I felt it shudder through me and knew, though I did not look round, that the others felt it too, and that the soldier had tightened his arm about the waist of his *bonne amie*.

Saint-Cloud finally, and every one struggling to disembark at once. The boat would

go on still to Suresnes, but not I, with the nearer prospect of the park, the wood, and the cascades before me. Besides, to go farther would be, through the vagaries of the river, to draw nearer the city. The crowd knew best.

He who has not seen Saint-Cloud is to be pitied. Saint-Germain with its forest, its castle, and the wide view from its high terrace, is nobler, Chantilly is more exquisite, but Saint-Cloud is the most human. It is so close to Paris,—only three sous away by boat,—and there is an ironic amusement in the thought that the common people come and go now just as formerly the court came and went. There is no illusion of country to be had here. Even when lying in the high grass, with all about one the green trunks of trees supporting a foliage so thick that the sunlight cannot penetrate directly, but steals through the translucent leaves in a soft disseminated haze, one is aware, beneath the buzzing of the bees and the thousand deli-

cate forest-sounds, of the low hum of the city; from the edge of the wooded hill above the cascade the Eiffel Tower, the white cupolas of the Sacré Cœur, and the dome of the Invalides, are to be seen, dwarfed but distinct. This closeness in touch with life is what I most love about Saint-Cloud. Landscapes are painted without figures or with vague unreal ones; we are accustomed to think of natural beauty and actual prosaic existence as incompatible. Saint-Cloud proves that they are not. The final effect, to be sure, is that of a compromise; but if in the adjustment beauty is not at its highest, far less is existence at its dullest; what the one has lost the other has more than gained. At Versailles I am conscious of a pang of unhappiness in the sight of these black-trousered-and-coated men and dingily dressed women swarming about the fountains and up the steps of the Little Trianon. It is not so much that they are ugly, —though from a decorative point of view

they are, — as that there, where the memories of the gorgeous aristocratic past cling about everything, they — and I — are desperately out of place. But at Saint-Cloud, where the aroma of the past is only a faint lingering perfume and the present is all about one, I would not permanently exchange the spectacle of these working-men and shop-girls for the presence of the lords and ladies of the court, who wandered here sometimes under Louis XVI, making love lightly, whispering assertions of eternal endurance for passions that would last a month — or less; behaving, in short, for all their grace and breeding, in much the same manner as this *canaille* they would have despised.

Meanwhile I strolled on, climbing the hill, and getting always farther into the wood. Sometimes I would emerge upon a clearing that would be all ablaze with poppies; but whether in meadow or forest, everywhere there were people, and always by twos except when there were children to

augment the number. Once, in a sunny little hollow, I came upon a party of three,—a man, a woman, and a baby. The man lay on his back, his coat off and rolled under his head for a pillow. He had covered his face with a red handkerchief and was slumbering in heavy stertorous content. It was hot. The woman had removed her shirt-waist and sat, her brown arms and shoulders glistening, her head bent over, and her hands resting on the ground. She looked up as I passed and stared at me without embarrassment. Why should she have been ashamed? Clothes were made to keep the cold from our bodies—for nothing else. She was right, I thought. When her clothes had changed from a blessing to a discomfort, she simply took them off without shame. She was right, for she was natural. It was I who was wrong, for not daring to do as much.

I threw myself down at last beneath some great elms, in the green twilight of whose shadow I could lie and yet gaze out upon a

sunny meadow beyond, that fairly flamed with the sleepy red flowers. Here surely I should be spying on no one (the scruple was for myself); but I had scarcely stretched myself on the ground, when I became aware of a murmur of voices drifting to me from a near-by thicket, and despite myself I began turning the sounds into words. (One's ears, it would seem, have no connection with one's conscience.)

"*Mais si, — encore plus. Tu le sais bien.* It's you who love me less —"

"I! — Ah, Jacques!"

And so forth.

Banal? Yes, profoundly, limitlessly banal; and in being so, very characteristic of Saint-Cloud. You must not go to Saint-Cloud to find a bright new idea that no one has ever had before. You will find only the old ones there that all people have in common. That is why Saint-Cloud is so important. We pass our lives in a futile attempt to avoid the banal. The fear of having feelings, and espe-

cially thoughts, that others have had is a bugbear to us. Our goal is to be as different as possible from every one else — original, in short. We do not see, or seeing do not feel, that the vital ideas and emotions are just those we have in common — that all the rest have little value. The man who quotes proverbs is insupportable, it is true; but that is not because he expresses thoughts thousands of men have had, but because he is not thinking at all, only making believe to think, with his parrot-like repetition of a ready-made phrase. It is exasperating to be told that a rolling stone gathers no moss; but to hear the same familiar truth expressed in words that show the thought to exist in the speaker's mind is not exasperating. The difficulty is, not to lose sight of the significance of the banal, not to find people less interesting because they resemble one another, not to find daily happenings any the less wonderful that they are daily; to keep always before us the marvelous quality of the usual.

"What a character for a book!" we think, — we petty scribblers, — when every once in a while we meet an eccentric. Not at all. There is no need to put him in a book; there is nothing to explain. His peculiarities have, just because they are peculiarities, but slight bearing on life; to transcribe them is a matter of photography. The great novelist is he who takes the common experience of ordinary people, and so vitalizes and interprets it as to make us, for the moment at least, see it as the wealth it really is. Only, when such a one arrives, we are too stupid to understand that he has but made evident the meaning of old formulas, and praise him for his new ideas.

The drowsy babble of the lovers' voices made my eyes droop, and I fell asleep. — When I awoke the shadows were long and cool, and the poppies glowed more dully in the field. I looked at my watch: it was nearly seven. So I strolled down out of the wood and the gardens into the village, and

followed the quay until I had reached the Restaurant Belvédère. I could not go wrong in dining here; for the wide *terrasse* was covered with little tables at which, always in pairs, were half the people I had seen on the boat. But I found a vacant place, slipped into it, and sat with my eyes half-closed, gazing across at the Bois de Boulogne that swept its greenness graciously down to the river. It was twilight. The warm evening breeze had sprung up, stirring my hair softly, but filling me somehow with a wistful discontent.

"*Monsieur désire?*" asked the waiter respectfully.

"Gingerbread with raisins in," I replied absently. I was not quite awake yet.

"*Monsieur??*"

"Oh!"—I started. "*Je veux diner.* Don't ask me. Bring me anything,—only not chicken."

"*Bien, monsieur.*"

He might have cheated me,—I was in no

mind to quibble about money, — but I do not think he did; not much anyway. I sat for a long time over the dinner, eating mechanically, sipping the delicate bordeaux (I was less vague in ordering the bordeaux), and watching the sky fade from gold to mauve. It came to me suddenly that I had dreamed something very beautiful asleep on the hill, but I could not recall what. Only the mood of the dream remained, hauntingly delicate. The dreams we cannot remember are always the loveliest. Across the Seine the poplars had faded to silver gray and their reflections were blurred together in the water. Lights began to show here and there. If there had been something perturbing about the day, what can I say of the evening? Its beauty ached through one like pain. I pushed back my chair at last on the crackling gravel, paid the bill hastily, and walked away, followed for some little time by the other diners' voices, high and slender through the still air.

The little tramway of the Val d'Or carries one swiftly back to Paris from the neighborhood of Saint-Cloud, through and beside the Bois. Yet if you asked me for advice I should hardly dare counsel you to take it at half-past eight of an August evening. Beautiful as the ride is then, it is a thousand times more melancholy. There were few other passengers in the tram with me. A man and his wife, she dozing, her head resting on her husband's shoulder, and two sleeping babies sprawling in tangled confusion over the legs of both parents, were all, during most of the trip. As we fled onward through the wood, the lamps of the open car spread a dim circle of light about us, evoking strange shadows and the ghosts of trees. But the effect of even this was not so profoundly sad as the impression I got when we whirled swiftly past some brightly illuminated restaurant (like that of the Château de Madrid) and caught for an instant the tinkle of laughter and the clatter of plate and glass.



Café in the Bois



At the Porte Maillot I descended. The depression was lost in the brilliancy of the reëntered city; instead, I was conscious of a reaction into exhilaration. It seemed incredible that there were Parisians still left at Saint-Cloud. The popular impression (that became promptly mine) was, clearly, that it would be folly to be at home on a night like this, so I took a cab and drove slowly down the Avenue de la Grande Armée and the Champs Elysées. That wide white pleasure street was flecked with open carriages. Not the splendid equipages that fill it to overflowing in winter, but dingy democratic *sapins* like the one I rode in. Cab after cab approached, met mine, and rolled by, all at so nearly identical a rate of motion that to watch them was like watching floating chips of wood in a river; and on a careful average five out of six held each a pair of lovers. Unless you have yourself driven down the Champs Elysées of an August night I despair of making you believe that, — because

it is true, and truth, whether stranger or not, is less plausible than fiction, which is constructed with especial reference to being believed. If, furthermore, you ask me how I knew that the couples I saw were lovers, I reply that no mistake was possible.

The lack of self-consciousness in these Parisians, and their admirable unconcern for what others might think, set me marveling once more. I had often wondered why in Paris one should be conscious of a harmony, a perpetually reinforced unity of impression, that one misses in other large cities. The explanation was clear enough now: it was because the people of Paris were in keeping with their surroundings. (And I saw that this also had been at the root of my liking for Saint-Cloud.) True, the pressure of middle-class philistinism is to be felt here as elsewhere; but whereas in London its depressing influence is paramount, here it is only a minor force struggling against the spirit of Paris, which is pagan, and which

on such a night as this rises like a great flood, sweeping everything before it. Here was a night that fairly besought one to love. Not a sound in the air, not a soft breath from the warm breeze, like the touch of a woman's fingers on one's cheek, that spoke of anything else. Anglo-Saxon lovers would have resisted the appeal and sat stiffly side by side without daring to embrace, for fear of "what people might think"; or at least would have awaited a dark turning. But in Paris what is natural is not to be ashamed of. French philosophers reason this out, French poets sing it (scarcely a year goes by that some new symbolic play in verse depicting the struggles of pagan Nature and Christian asceticism, the sympathy all with the former, is not produced at the Odéon), and, more important, because a surer index to the real spirit of the race, the masses feel it. Perhaps the truth is that there is rather an æsthetic than a moral ideal in France, that beauty takes precedence over right. If there is any

justice in so broad a generalization I am not sure that the French ideal is not the more trustworthy. (I do not like professed æsthetes; but that is because they have narrowed and warped the meaning of beauty.) For while the words "right" and "wrong" have, it would seem, only a relative significance, and are even at that so confused that half the time we cannot decide which is which, beauty stands out as something absolute; our individual conceptions of it, as we grow in fineness of feeling, resemble each other strangely. Not that I believe the lovers in the taxi-cabs to have been behaving as they did for such reasons. Oh dear, no! Most of them probably did not know how to reason, and anyway they had no time. Nevertheless I felt that they were acting — by instinct, if you will, — harmoniously (and harmony is the first law of beauty), instead of being consciously good. For on much of the affection that came under my eyes this August evening — particularly on that dis-

played the most intensely — I fear that the Church would have frowned.

Through all the mile-long splendor of the avenue, the carriages followed one another a few yards apart, — black, shabby, ordinary, like actors in street-dress rehearsing on a stage set for a drama of gods. Paris was very like Saint-Cloud in its humanity — or perhaps it was Saint-Cloud that resembled Paris: for in this white sweeping drive, befitting the pomp and luxury of a princely cavalcade, these hackney cabs and their unaristocratic occupants were not out of place.

In the long vista a *fiacre*, still far away, appeared somehow taller and more shadowy than the others; as it approached it resolved itself into one like the rest, but the hood of which had been raised. Within were a couple exchanging the most frantic kisses I had yet remarked, and with such desperate rapidity that one thrilled at the thought of the number they would have achieved by the time they reached the Place de l'Étoile.

I lay back on my cushions and laughed and laughed. For do you think they had raised the hood in an attempt at concealment? Not they! In the event of an extremely obliging rain, or of a pedestrian's tardy desire to stare, once you are well past him, the hood of your Parisian cab is of some little service. As protection from the prompter gaze of loungers or that of the occupants of other vehicles, it is worse than useless. Not only does it disguise nothing, but the fact of its being up in fine weather is the signal for a close and curious inspection by all within range. No, this superlatively amorous pair had raised it in the pretense that they believed they were doing something wrong, and did not want to be seen; in the effort to realize the intoxicating impression of secret sin. I could only laugh in appreciation of the refinement; but a more serious observer might have frowned. For there was more of what is bad about Paris in this subterfuge than is at first apparent. If Paris

were thoroughly pagan, it would be as moral a city as exists; moreover, it would have a morality to which an intelligent man could assent. But it is not. That the sex-relation between people not united in marriage is more facile here than elsewhere seems to me at times a step away from the unnaturalness of monogamy (it is only convention that makes polygamy vile) and so right. What is bad is that in theory it is still held to be wrong. From the resulting paradox there is derived that unwholesome sophisticated pleasure that invests an act at once officially considered wicked and not personally felt to be so. And the children? Yes, that is the difficulty. We have a long way to go before a satisfactory system of polygamy can be established.

But the lovers' carriage was gone, and I was conscious again of the strange discontent, stronger now, sweeping in upon me like a great wave. The mood of the night was too overpoweringly complete, its pres-

sure too intense. It was like the persistent throbbing of one note in a symphony. I touched the *cocher's* arm with my stick, and bade him drive me home.

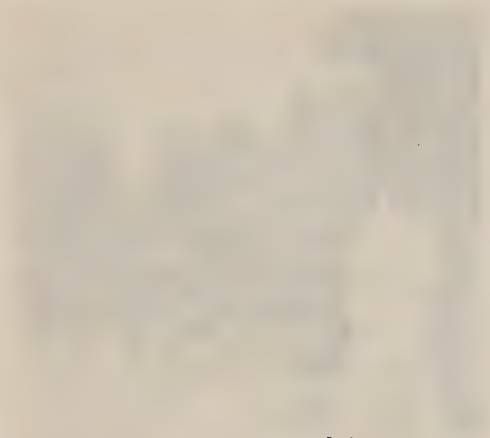
"It is instructive," I said to myself when I stood once more on my little balcony, "to watch from outside. If you had been part of this day, my friend, you would not have understood it."

I had spoken aloud to convince myself that what I said was true; but the lack of enthusiasm in my voice was too apparent, and suddenly, without quite knowing how, I found myself within at my table.

"My dear Linette," I wrote, "I was out at Saint-Cloud to-day—all alone. It was very beautiful, and there were red poppies everywhere. But I was unhappy: for I remembered when I had the poppies and you too, *ma petite Linette*. Have you forgotten? If you have nothing better to do to-morrow, I wonder whether you would not care to—"

Linette





Towers of St. Sulpice

Towers of St. Sulpice

In my Court



VII

In My Court

THE horse-chestnuts in the court beneath my bed-room window have been bare a long time, but there are still some leaves left on the elms. There will be few, though, by to-morrow, for the mid-October wind has caught them and sends them whirling downward. They sweep over the hard ground, curl like brown foam from the tops of the neat piles into which the *concierge* has raked them, and rustle across the green benches on which the nurses knit in the morning and the *bourgeois* read their papers in the late afternoon. The children are wild with joy. Calling to one another exultantly, they plow their way back and forth through the crackling heaps of leaves, and clutch them up by

the handful to let them fall again in showers of dull red and tarnished gold. There are two who do nothing but roll persistently all day long. From time to time their nurses desert the knitting, to rush across volubly and drag them to their feet; but no power on earth can keep them long upright, and left to themselves they flop to the ground and roll again, silently and deliriously. The high thin voices of the others rise to me as I stand at my bed-room window. I like children, and they sometimes like me, — not always, but a little oftener than their elders do perhaps, — because I do not feel either condescension or embarrassment in their presence; but to-day I would not go into the court. The frankness with which children forget is almost as painful as the hypocrisy with which their parents pretend not to have forgotten.

I used frequently to sit there last summer with the muffled sound of Paris in my ears and the thought of Paris in my mind, while

In the Garden of the Luxembourg



IN THE GARDEN of the
LUXEMBOURG -

the sunlight crept along the bench, and the children played their games around me. Sometimes I would awake with a start to find my seat a house to which a visit was being paid, or an automobile speeding through the Bois, and then I would inquire whether I were in the way, and the children would chorus courteously, "Oh, not at all, monsieur! *Ne vous dérangez pas, monsieur*"; after which I would forget them again, and they me.

At other times, when the play was less intense, I would have scraps of conversation with one or another. A little blonde girl of ten, with a severe dignity of manner that sometimes deserted her when the games were exciting, spoke earnestly with me about the weather, and informed me often and with pride that she, her parents, and three minor members of her family — all equally blonde, but of degrees of dignity diminishing mathematically with their ages, clear to the youngest, who was four and not dignified at all —

were soon to go to the country for a few weeks. In Paris the words "*je vais passer quelques semaines à la campagne*" are as impressive as "I am going to run down to my country-house," in America. I learned later that the destination of the blonde family was only Saint-Denis. But at ten one has not yet begun to make invidious distinctions. There is Paris and there is the country. Saint-Denis means no less than Trouville.

There were many other children who played in the court, — for the house was large and the apartments were numerous; but there was one so different from the others that I fell into the habit of looking up from my book to watch him when he was there, and of wondering about his absence when he was not. He was a child of six, with an oval face, chestnut curls that he had an odd little way of shaking back from his forehead, and large brown eyes strangely flecked with gold. No one was ever more unmistakably an aristocrat than this six-year-old boy. The uncon-

scious grace of movement, the gentleness of manner, the instinctive courtesy, which, if anything tangible, are the signs of aristocracy — he possessed them all; and yet his name was just Etienne Dupont, and Dupont carries with it about as much connotative distinction in French as Jones in English. To me, aristocracy, or what I mean by it, — for no word has so many varying interpretations, — seems one of the most gracious things in life, bringing out the charm in commonplaces, lending beauty to a word or a glance, lingering like a perfume above bare existence. Impossible of adequate definition, it is the Something-Else like that which remains in a picture after one has analyzed it. The more I have looked for and found it, the more certain I have become that aristocracy is never acquired, always a matter of birth, but not at all a matter of family. It is perhaps a fair presumption that aristocrats are more likely to come of a stock which has already produced many; but *roturiers* are

born every day into families which have been noble since the crusades, and aristocrats into those that dwell in tenements, or — which is more astounding — into those of the lower-middle-class. So the miracle was not that Etienne's name should have been Dupont, but that there should have been nothing to explain the child in the father. He was a stout red-faced man, kindly, I was sure, but with a frank love of vulgarity, if I might judge from the stories I overheard him relating to other fathers and from his gross resounding laugh. He was a clerk in the office of the mayor of the *arrondissement*. Do not think me unjust toward Monsieur Dupont. I was not dismissing him as a man — only as an aristocrat. Aristocracy is not one of the things that it takes long study to discern, like courage or character. It is a kind of fineness that reveals itself in a thousand ways, and is as easily discernible in a man at first sight as after a long intimacy. I did not know the mother, — she had been

dead five years; but I inquired about her of the little old man with the skull-cap. He has lived for longer than he can remember in the house and has observed three generations of its inhabitants.

"*C'était une brave femme*," he said, "*petite, grasse, bavarde — non, pas du tout distinguée. Elle ressemblait beaucoup à son mari.* A strange child, *le petit*, to be born of such parents, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Somehow the answer pleased me. I liked to think of Etienne as a changeling. The secret may, however, have been, that I could not follow Monsieur and Madame Dupont back to their own childhood. Nothing is so fragile, so easily lost, as the strange quality that produces this delicacy of sentiment, this charm of manner. Rare gift of the gods as it is, it should be immortal; but it is not. It is an exquisite flower that must be carefully tended if it is to live. In one of Mr. Leonard Merrick's novels (which I am amazed that so few Americans have read; for it is as delight-

ful as a fairy tale and as true as a syllogism) the hero, being in quest of his youth, remembers a little girl with whom he had played as a child, and who possessed that gentle distinction (though he did not give it a name) which so charmed me in Etienne. He sought her out and found — a vain, shallow-minded woman, with a loud voice, a simper, and a habit of noise. It seemed improbable that the Monsieur Dupont whom I saw occasionally in the court, with his jovial *bonhomie*, and his commonness, could ever have had anything of the fineness I saw in his son; but it was not impossible. Even Etienne might some day become — but I refused to consider that.

Etienne was not forward in play, but rather retiring. He was in no sense the leader of his comrades — the little girl of the yellow pigtails was that. Nevertheless there was in the attitude of the other children toward him a gentleness that was almost deference. Just as, when we talk with a man whose English is choice and beautiful, we find our own words

becoming more careful, so with this child of six the manners of his playmates were noticeably better than with one another. The youngest of the blonde children might fall on his face and wail unheeded; but I saw the most boisterous young scapegrace in the court turn once with a swift solicitous, "*Tu ne t'es pas fait mal, Etienne?*" when in a rough game the latter had been thrown to the ground.

The child, I remarked, as I watched him more closely, had another quality apart from his aristocracy — imagination. It was not he who led the games, but it was he who created them; and if some of his inventions were puerile, I could not but admire the complicated originality of others. He did not speak to me except to wish me "*Bon jour*," or "*Bon soir*," with a shy smile so radiant that it seemed to me pure sunlight; but seeing the interest I was too clumsy not to show for his productions, he would cast me from time to time a deprecating, half-appealing glance in which

there was something of the poet reading his verses. Then one day he discovered the game of Ogre, a game so complex, so involved, that I despair of making it clear to you. As the exposition of the game progressed, a reverent silence fell upon the listeners. Etienne's face glowed with inspiration, and he spoke breathlessly, finding successive rules as Shelley must have found successive words for "The Skylark." It will be enough for you to know that an ogre inhabited a castle (otherwise one of the green benches) which he, being lame, could not leave. But the castle was situate in a thick forest where many travelers lost their way. (I would stake all I have that Etienne had never read "The Pilgrim's Progress.") Unaware that the castle was so dreadfully occupied, they would welcome the sight of it joyfully, and, knocking for admittance, would, under certain conditions, be captured; under others, set aside to fatten; and under still others (most difficult), actually eaten. They would then, if

Old Court in Rue Vercingetorix



OLD COURT IN
RUE VERCINGETORIX

uneaten, be rescued by knights of Charlemagne's court; if eaten, brought to life by a good fairy who could put the ogre to sleep with a certain magic formula. This will suffice, but this was not all. The complications of the game were innumerable. My brain reeled at the magnificence of the conception.

"But," asked the little girl of the blonde pig-tails with her matter-of-fact voice (and the answer to the question was implied in her tone), "but who shall be the ogre?"

There was a chorus of "*Moi!*" "*Moi!*" "*Moi!*" but Etienne shook his head firmly. "No," he said, coming toward my bench, and looking straight at me out of his great brown eyes in which the tiny points of yellow shone like little gold stars, "monsieur will be the ogre."

The others drew back with a sudden restraint that was one fourth the hostility of little savages toward an intruder, and three fourths the sheepishness of miniature *bourgeois* shocked by an outraged rule of conduct.

But there was neither self-consciousness nor boldness about Etienne,—only confidence in his instinct. He was the aristocrat through and through now, without a trace of that concern-for-what-others-may-think that is the profoundest characteristic of the middle class, the sign at once of its importance and its pettiness, of the depth below which it cannot sink and the height above which it cannot rise. Etienne was looking at me trustfully.

"Yes," I said simply, "I will be the ogre."

His question had meant more to me than my reply could possibly mean to him. There are two things that touch the heart deeply, perhaps because they are so rare. The one is a woman's sudden spontaneous caress, the other the impulsive advances of an unspoiled child. In the emotion caused by neither does vanity play any part.

So for half an hour, abandoning my dignity, I played at Ogre, with a fervor which

was all gratitude to Etienne, making fearful grimaces, testing tentatively the plumpness of my victims, or devouring them outright, while they shivered in excitement or uttered shrieks of delighted terror, — for they were soon won over, being but children after all, and having that sense of the dramatic against which no other instinct of the French heart can long hold out, — and roaring so horribly that the nurses forgot their knitting for admiration and the mothers rushed to the windows in fear. When the game was at its height Etienne ran swiftly from me.

"*Bon soir, papa,*" he cried; and glancing up I saw that Monsieur Dupont had entered the court, and was staring at us in surprise. He was just home, I judged, from the *mairie*, for he carried his black-leather portfolio under one arm. As for the travelers, prisoners, and knights of Charlemagne's court, they had stiffened suddenly into rigid little men and women who reminded me sadly of photographs in a family album.

Etienne had seized his father's hand. "We were playing Ogre, papa," he explained. "Monsieur was the ogre."

"Ah?" said Monsieur Dupont looking at me uncomprehendingly.

Etienne drew his father forward, and still holding tight to him with one hand, held out the other to me. "Thank you, monsieur," he said gravely. "You were a splendid ogre. *Au revoir, monsieur.*"

Monsieur Dupont raised his hat to me politely, but his face was still puzzled. The French *bourgeois* seldom plays with his children. He is fond of them, and far more prodigal of caresses than an American father, but he treats them always as though they were grown-up, and requires of them a solemn respect, that may not lessen their affection for him, but that destroys the possibility of sympathy. They have no pleasant half-way stage, but leap at once from infancy to manhood. Even the games played in my court when Etienne was absent were,

unless they were mere irrepressible romping (and they were seldom that) prim and dignified games. The recognized wildness of the lad between eighteen and twenty-two when, the *baccalauréat* passed, and business or the university entered, he has become all at once his own master, — a wildness often resembling debauch, — is perhaps but a reaction from this philistinism into which he has been crushed, but a struggling forth of his own identity. In this city, where the old struggle between Paganism and Christianity is forever going on, and where talent is strewn as thickly as the leaves in my court, it is matter for conjecture whether he will emerge completely, make of his reaction a philosophy, and leave behind him a great or a little name; or whether, incapable of thinking, or impeded by circumstances, he will return to the caste from which he sprang; whether he will be one of the class that makes France preëminent, or one of that which keeps France populous. In the first

case the reaction will be good, for it will have served toward achievement; in the second harmful, for then it will have been a force making against his happiness in the life for which he is fitted.

Two or three days later I went again into the court. The children greeted me cordially.

"But where is Etienne?" I asked, looking about me.

"He is ill, monsieur," said one solemnly.

"Ill!" I exclaimed. "Not seriously?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, very ill indeed. Would monsieur play at Ogre to-day?"

"No," I said, "not to-day — another time"; and left the court. It was nothing, doubtless, — to be ill is always in a child's mind to be very ill. Nevertheless I was worried — for the ten or fifteen minutes one concedes to another's troubles. Then September came and I went to the shore for two weeks, and forgot Etienne and the court in the joy of the crisp salt air and the sting-

ing spray of the breakers that beat upon the Norman coast.

When, having driven home from the Gare Saint-Lazare through the sunny streets on my return one mid-September afternoon, I strode buoyantly into the court, I saw at once that something was wrong. The children stood about in groups whispering, and an atmosphere like that of an English Sunday seemed to envelop the whole enclosure.

"*Qu'est-ce qu'il y a, Marthe?*" I asked the little blonde girl.

"*Etienne, monsieur,*" she replied, with, beneath the half-comprehending awe of her tone, a certain pride in being the first to break the news: "he died day before yesterday. The funeral has just been."

You have known it all along; you have seen ahead from the beginning; for to you it is only a story, — a too simple obvious story you must find it; but to me, for whom it was truth, it was not obvious, and I would

think it sacrilege to make it over into something more artistic, better constructed.

I was lonely that evening, and went to the apartment of the little old man across the hall. He welcomed me courteously and gave me an arm-chair beside his before the open fire; for the nights were already cool. I spoke to him of Etienne.

"It is strange," I said, "that his death should make me unhappy, — a child of six whom I saw but a few times and played with once."

"No," said the old man, "it is not strange. Every added capacity for pleasure is a capacity for pain too. The same sensitiveness which led you at once to recognize the boy's charm makes you now feel pain at his death. It is nothing that Etienne was a child and that you saw him but a few times. What are our most poignant memories — a life-long friendship, a happy married life? No, but the intimacy of a two days' acquaintanceship under odd conditions, some little trick

of manner in a woman who was never even our mistress, or the glance of inspired comprehension exchanged with some one unknown and never seen again. But you should not grieve. For yourself you have added a delicate memory, and for Etienne it is surely better."

"No," I cried rebelliously, "it is not better! Life is wonderful!"

"Ah!" observed the old man sadly, "you are young."

"Etienne was younger!"

"There are two great blessings," he continued, "youth and death. Youth is good," he said, his eyes brightening; "I remember my own, though it is a half-century away now; but death, I am sure, is better," he added wearily.

Two days later, towards evening I descended again to the court and sat down on a bench in the quietest corner. After a time Monsieur Dupont entered, wheeling the bicycle that he sometimes uses on his trips

to and from the *mairie*. He passed close to me, — for the little shed under which he keeps the machine was not far from my seat; and I saw with sudden pity that his heavy face looked heavier and his little eyes dull and red. When he had put the bicycle away, he came back and stood looking about him apathetically. I raised my hat when he turned toward me, and he replied mechanically, then, after a moment's hesitation, sat down beside me and opened his newspaper slowly. But I understood that he was longing to speak to some one, and so closed my book and waited. He glanced at me two or three times to see if I were reading, then at last laid down his paper.

"You have heard that my son is dead?" he said abruptly, in a tone that was less a question than a challenge and almost hostile with timidity.

"Yes," I said, as gently as possible, "I know."

I paused, searching for something to add

and finding nothing. That mattered little, however. It was not the expression of another's sympathy that he craved, but an opportunity of speaking himself, of somehow escaping from the facts by putting them into words. And he was not one who could talk to himself: he must have a listener.

"I buried him the day before yesterday," he went on dully, as though repeating a lesson. "I buried my son. I shall never see him again. — I don't understand."

It was pitiful to see this man, whom general ideas had always passed by, discovering now for himself the bitter meaning of the old, old formula. All his life, doubtless, he had said on occasion, with glib solemnity, that death was very inexplicable and sad, because that was the thing to say; now for the first time he felt the significance of the phrase. "I do not understand," he had said helplessly. The effort was too great. He fell back on facts.

"It was scarlet fever," he continued. "He suffered, monsieur."

I winced. It has always seemed to me terrible for a child to suffer — not because, being innocent, he does not deserve to (suffering is as horrible in the sinner as in the saint); but because he has nothing to help him through. He is too young to have either a God in whom he can trust or one whom he can revile; either a sustaining confidence in a great wise scheme of which he is part or the contemptuous courage born of disbelief in the existence of any scheme: he can only feel pain and cry out. And Etienne had been so delicate and sensitive a child!

After a moment the man spoke again. "What had he done to suffer so?" he cried. "You saw him playing here. You talked with him. You know whether he was good or not, — he was always like that, monsieur. What had he done? *Bon Dieu!* What had he done?" he repeated fiercely.

What indeed! And what reply could I make to this question that has been asked since the beginning of the world — and never answered?

"You must not think of that," I said hurriedly. "That is all done with." (How in our impotence of mind we catch at stock-phrases!) "There is no suffering where your son is now — only happiness."

My hypocrisy sickened me; but the fact that I clung to it nevertheless brought me a sudden flash of tolerance for the point of view of the priest. Time and again I had heard these same platitudes spoken from the pulpit or at funerals, and had despised the clergymen who uttered them for the insincerity in their sanctimonious voices, for the attitude of faith in which faith was wanting (it was not, doubtless, that they disbelieved them, at least not always; only that they did not feel them at the moment); but now I understood that they knew these formulas to

be healing and, irrespective of their truth or untruth, best to be believed.

Monsieur Dupont looked at me dubiously. "Do you think," he asked, "that I shall see my son again?"

"I am sure of it," I answered firmly.

Who is there that has the right to speak the truth if the truth will only give needless pain? I was glad I had lied; for the father's heavy face softened and his eyes grew less dull.

"You think so, really?" he asked again, not because he doubted me, but for the comfort of hearing the assertion repeated.

"Yes," I replied once more.

He sat silent for a few minutes, looking away with a half smile on his lips. By telling this man that I thought one way I had somehow — temporarily at least — eased his pain; if I had told him I thought another way I should have made him wretched; and all the time what I thought or did not think mattered as little to the truth itself as the

brown leaves that were already beginning to fall sparsely mattered to the wind that sent them rustling downward. The irony of it was appalling.

The light had faded. There was no one left in the court but us. Monsieur Dupont turned to me suddenly. "I am keeping you. See, it is late," he said, taking out his watch, "and you have not dined."

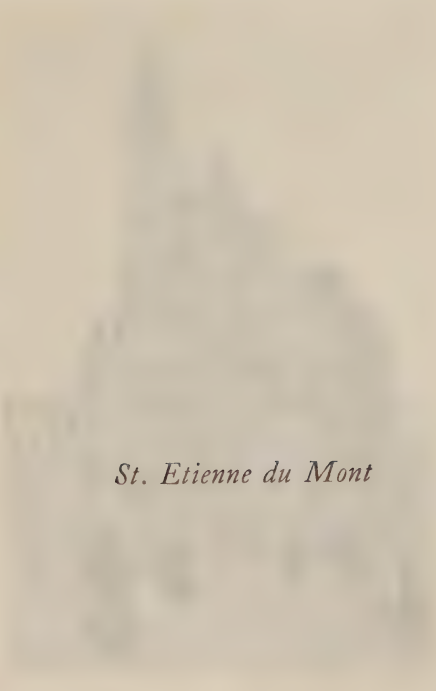
We rose. He looked at me in a troubled silence for some seconds, groping dumbly for the right words with which to leave me. He lived on habits; it was they that would overcome his suffering. For each situation he would have, I thought, a fitting phrase. But the present case was unique and unprepared for; there was no phrase that solved it.

"I thank you," he stammered at last, holding out his hand. "You have been very kind. Good-night, monsieur."

That was a month ago. The children have forgotten now, and Monsieur Dupont has be-

come again, so far as one can see, the placid *bourgeois* he was before. I thought to-day a trifle bitterly, when I heard his boisterous laugh, only a little modulated by the consciousness of his mourning, that Etienne was no longer a memory for him, only the memory of a memory. But to think so was arrogant and unfair. Who can tell in how many delicate ways the influence of his child creeps through the man's existence?

For myself it is hard to explain what is left. I do not think of Etienne often, — how should I in a world which is rich and exultant with vitality? Yet I feel that somehow, where his brief life touched mine, something was added for me to the store of significant experiences that one puts away and that become the background of one's mind.



St. Etienne du Mont

come again, so far as one can see, the placid *bourgeois* he was before. I thought to-day a trifle bitterly, when I heard his boisterous laugh, only a little modulated by the consciousness of his mourning, that Etienne was no longer a memory for him, only the memory of a memory. But to think so was ar-

was found for you in the store of significant experiences that one puts away and that become the background of one's mind.

Père Lachaise



VIII

Père Lachaise.—An Impression

IN minds courageous enough to embrace it, the thought of death is always a conscious presence; but they, it has been well said, are the noble minds, and I know that I am not among them. I am not more serious than most men; for, once past the black period of impotent dejection succeeding the day when it first flashed upon me, as it has flashed upon so many thousand others, that perhaps in all this seething, struggling, swarming existence, there was no plan, no idea, nothing, —only hopeless confusion,—I came slowly to feel, with a lassitude to which braver men do not surrender, that the one way to face

the chaos, and preserve a measure of tranquillity, was to refuse to take it seriously as a whole; that the kindest way of considering life — since, it seemed, one must consider it somehow — was as a joke. And so I laugh at it all, — when I can, — and at myself more than the rest of it. It is not hard to laugh; for the drearier and more pointless life appears regarded as a play with a beginning, an end, and a moral, the more inimitable it becomes as a farce. Only, beneath the amusement in the observation of these pygmies playing at being heroes, myself as hard as any of the others, I am dimly aware of a something else that I do not care to face. Nearly always it lurks motionless at the bottom of my mind; but on certain days it comes, unbidden, out of its hiding, to settle down like a black shadow on everything, obliterating the farce, and leaving me conscious only of itself, and of what it is — the thought of death.

Yesterday was such a day. I awoke to the

gray November morning with a sense of unutterable desolation. All that there was of buoyant and hopeful in me seemed to have been extinguished, and I felt myself wrapped about with a moral depression that was like the pale mist enveloping the bare leafless elms in the little court on which my bedroom window looks. Through the morning I fought the sensation, struggling not to think, but in the afternoon, exhausted, I gave up, and went out into the solitude of the crowded streets. At such times there is no reality in externals; although I can recall every one of the black fancies — silly fancies they seem to-day — that beset me as I walked, I cannot remember how and by what détours I reached the Place de la Bastille. But in that blank square, about which cling more recollections than about any other spot in Paris, I paused; and, slowly, before the emptiness of its present and the majestic memories of its past, conflicting heterogeneous notions stole out of my mind and the vague depression that weighed down

upon me resolved itself into the one great thought. It must always be a terrible thought for those who have not faith that death is only a transition; but there is in the very dramatic completeness of it a kind of grim satisfaction for the iconoclast, akin to that one derives from a tragedy.

From the Place de la Bastille to the cemetery of Père Lachaise leads the rue de la Roquette, and into it after a few minutes I turned, submissively it seemed to me, so possessed is one at times with the fatuous illusion that he is the tool of some unknown force. As I did so, a long funeral procession curved in from the other side of the square; and while the hearse, with its black swaying plumes and the rigid, expressionless driver, crept by, every man on the crowded sidewalks bared his head. There is in Latin countries a certain reverence before the presence of death that is nowhere more profound than in pagan France. In Spain and Italy, too, men raise their hats at the passage



Small Shops, Rue de Rennes


L.G.H.
PARIS

of the hearse, but there seems to me to be a deeper feeling about the act in France than elsewhere. Imagination, perhaps, yet I think not; for the more one learns to doubt the conclusions of his reason, the more one grows to trust the truth of these swift, ephemeral impressions. Little forms are often the symbols of great ideas; it is so, whether clearly understood or not, with this simple ceremonial in France; for what is so nobly significant of the essential equality of men, that lies beneath their differences, as this universal salutation of Death, the one common master of us all?

Where it leaves the Place de la Bastille, the rue de la Roquette is a busy jostling street; but little by little, as it proceeds on its way, its aspect changes. It should be called the rue du Cimetière, for surely no other street ever advanced with so unmistakable an indication of its goal. Following it, one grows conscious that the crowd is first slowly thinning, then becoming sparse.

In the long even lines of architecture to right and left great gaps appear, through which one gazes at the blank windowless back walls of apartment houses surrounding the space not built up; and the gay shows in the little shop-windows change to displays of uncut tomb-stones, artificial flowers, and mortuary wreaths. There are no rattling wagons on the cobble-stones; a silence has settled upon the street. So that finally, when one lifts his eyes, and sees the gray wall of Père Lachaise ahead of him, the sight seems as logical as the denoûment of a book. The rue de la Roquette might be the emblem of a life.

Entering the cemetery by the great gate, I was conscious of no change. The silence here was not profounder than that which hung over the street I had just left. Only there the two sides of the thoroughfare were flanked each with an interminable wall of masonry that formed one vast dwelling, stopping short now and then at the edge of a

yawning unused patch of ground, to begin again, always the same, at the other; while here the avenue was lined with a multitude of tiny stone constructions, like shrunken houses, none more than three or four feet wide, and crowding close upon one another, yet each built, separate and complete by itself, in a pitiful attempt to claim a remnant of individuality for some indistinguishable bit of the dust that fills the ground beneath them all. The rue de la Roquette was life resembling death; this was death striving for the appearance of life.

To the left of the avenue, and only a little way from the Porte Principale, is the grave of de Musset. It is marked by a stone on which are carved the lines from "Lucie":—

> "Mes chers amis, quand je mourrai
> Plantez un saule au cimetière.
> J'aime son feuillage éploré,
> La paleur m'en est douce et chère,
> Et son ombre sera légère
> A la terre où je dormirai";

and over it obediently droops a very small and sickly willow. I never enter Père Lachaise without stopping to read the verses quoted, nor without satisfying myself that the willow is still as unimpressive as ever. No one doubts the importance of de Musset's rank in literature; his prose is unsurpassed, and one must be callous indeed not to feel the lyric charm of his verse; but, so much granted, he remains only the finest and most delicate of sentimentalists. He was of the age of Lamartine, when poets rediscovered how pleasant it was to weep; and in all his serious verse the note of sincerity is never once touched. To assert that "Les Nuits" were born of the unhappiness de Musset's rupture with George Sand caused him, is an absurdity; they were born of his artistic conception of his unhappiness. The distinction, however, is too subtle not to appear sophistical. "Les Nuits" were de Musset's best expression of his life, and his life was so good a pose that it convinced even himself.

After that, to say that it convinced the world is an anti-climax ; for the world, on the perpetual look-out for melodrama, is only too eager to be deceived; its delight in being given what it craves makes its critical judgment at the time impossible. We have all been corrupted by the artistic principle. We are not much interested in existence as it is, — incoherent, unbegun, and unfinished; we want it made over into something logical and complete that we call romance. We are pleased to be told of a life which appears the working out of a theme, particularly a tragic one. Consistent grief, ending in death, especially appeals to us. But Nature has mercifully ordained that a consistent grief shall be impossible. No one can for a great while love — except very calmly and sweetly — a person who is no longer by his side. If a lover is to kill himself in despair at his mistress's death, he must do so immediately ; for the despair will soon be gone. There is more forgetting than remembering in life.

We will not, though, recognize the kindness of such a law, except sometimes theoretically, as I am recognizing it now; but continue always in our search for romance, indifferent to the fact that wherever romance is found it exists either as an accident, — only a seeming agreement with our dramatic principle, — or as a pose. In de Musset's case the pose was perfect and admirably sustained; the laws of romance were satisfied. Hence his great popularity and that of the four exquisitely worded poems which best represent him. They were written nearly a century ago, but their appeal is still great, and will be, as long as the craving for romance exists. To attempt to make any point by an attack on their sincerity would be fruitless; if lines from "Les Nuits" had been carved on de Musset's tomb, I should never have tried to express the feeling it aroused in me.

It is, however, from another very different poem that the verses used have been

chosen. The mood of "La Nuit de Mai" is elusive, wistful, and strangely enchanted, but "Lucie" is only a luxurious delighted riot of sadness. Every one knows the poem: A boy and a girl, each fifteen years old, sit dreaming one night at a harpsichord beside an open window, through which drift moonlight and the perfume of spring flowers. They are silent. The boy's hand brushes the girl's; she starts from her reverie, touches the keys, and sings. She stops, weeping, rests her head against his shoulder, and they kiss. But she is very sad, perhaps with a premonition of her fate; for two months later she is dead.

It is hard not to retain a little affection for "Lucie," especially if one became acquainted with it very young; but surely no grown man in his sober senses would maintain that this *élégie* is an expression of sincere grief. Grief hurts — to express and to be told about; but whatever tears de Musset shed in composing "Lucie" (and I do not

doubt that they were many) must have given him untold pleasure.

The poem begins, to state the mood, and concludes, to emphasize it, with the six lines now engraved on de Musset's tomb. Let me quote them again: —

> "Mes chers amis, quand je mourrai,
> Plantez un saule au cimetière.
> J'aime son feuillage éploré,
> La paleur m'en est douce et chère,
> Et son ombre sera légère
> A la terre où je dormirai."

Rereading these lines yesterday, in the cemetery of Père Lachaise, I thought suddenly and irreverently of a stanza in a song that some years ago used to be sung in America among boys and girls on pleasure parties, whenever gayety was high. It runs as follows: —

> "Oh, dig my grave both wide and deep,
> Place tomb-stones at my head and feet,
> And on my breast a turtle-dove,
> To show the world I died of love."

Written down in black and white, as they now are, these four lines appear so much

more atrocious than they ever sounded — though heaven knows they sounded bad enough — that I am shocked at their having seemed in any sense analogous to the quotation from "Lucie." And yet my judgment, struggling out of the anguish caused by those barbarous rhymes, still insists that they are. Although de Musset's lines are exquisite verse, the mere sound of which is delicious, and these the most abject doggerel, the sentiment of both stanzas is the same, no falser in the one than in the other. But death is a very grim and tragic reality, and so for men to have accepted the pretty mawkishness of "Lucie" as genuine feeling, to have taken de Musset at his word, and to have planted an actual willow above his grave, is a bit of the grossest vulgarity, that shocks one in the same way it would shock him to hear a Tosti song in a Gothic cathedral. To-day, when the willow is absurdly puny and unimpressive, it is the puerility of the whole proceeding that most occupies one; but before many

years the tree will have become large enough to be convincing, and then one will feel only anger at the sacrilege.

De Musset's grave, however, is the first and last in Père Lachaise before which one can experience anything even so distantly akin to humor as the irony roused by this sentimentality accepted as sentiment; for across the end of the Avenue Principale and directly in one's path as one advances rises Bartholomé's Monument to the Dead.

There is nothing comic about the fool in "Lear." With his acrid reflections he is a kind of Greek chorus, each of his jests a harping on the bitter theme that is driving the old king to madness. But a time comes when the tragedy has grown too profound to admit of even the semblance of mirth, and the fool disappears, to be heard of no more. Some similar effacement takes place in the mind of a man sensitive to impressions, when he visits Père Lachaise. As one gazes at the Monument to the Dead all incidental

thoughts, however relevant, become impossible, and one is conscious only of the mystery and the grandeur and the terrible inevitability of death. The simplicity and symmetry of the work are overwhelming. These two nude central figures standing in the door of a tomb, their backs to us, the woman with her arm stretched out, her hand resting on the man's shoulder, state the mood of the whole conception as unmistakably as the first great sweeping chord states the tonality of a movement in a symphony. They are looking inward; the sculptor has not needed to reveal their faces to express the awe and the fear and the wonder that they feel at the gate of the unknown. These two stand in repose; but without, on a narrow ledge which traverses the tomb at about a third of its height, there approach from either side, in two lines of splendidly composed disorder, others, in postures of grief, of despair, of abandon, of terror, — none with hope. It may be that the artist thought

of these simply as mourners, but I prefer to believe that he meant them as those who must follow the first two through the door; and so, in imagination, one sees the two lines, continued here to the edges of the tomb, stretching on without end, inexhaustibly, and composed not of marble images but of living men and women, — of thousands, of millions, of all humanity, each with his place in the line, but none knowing surely where it may be, until he sees suddenly the black door before him.

Below the ledge in an embrasure somewhat wider than the door above, but not so high, is a group of four, — a man and a woman, dead, lying rigid side by side, their heads slightly turned toward each other and the four hands clasped together, across their thighs the body of a child, face down, swathed but for a protruding foot and a tiny relaxed hand; and on a step above the three a half-kneeling woman's figure, nude except for a veil that floats delicately behind

her and falls softly over one knee. Her arms are outstretched, and she gazes down at the dead below. On the wall beneath her left arm are inscribed the words: "*Sur ceux qui habitaient le pays de l'ombre de la mort une lumière resplendit*"; but I think the sculptor's purpose was artistic rather than symbolic here. The contrast between the almost painful realism in the emaciated bodies of the corpses and the idealism of the gracious exquisitely poised creature above is glorious.

If I have found much meaning in this monument, it is not that I imagine its merit to consist in its intellectual significance. Its true greatness lies, of course, in its splendid unity of composition, its dignity of design, its beautiful handling of the nude, and in the architectural simplicity of the whole, — of which things, vital and all-important as they are in sculpture, it is difficult to write and still more difficult to read. Nor is it that I am accustomed to consider more

than casually the symbolism of a work of art. I feel, as much as another, distrust for the picture or the statue that tells a story. A story is better told in literature, where sequence of time can be expressed. Painting and sculpture, higher forms of art, appeal to the emotions of the man æsthetically cultivated directly without the intervention of thought. The subtle laws governing them are not the sterile forms the Philistine thinks them, but the hypnotic passes by which somehow the artist is enabled to transfer his mood to the mind of another. They were discovered, not invented. The rendering in a picture or a statue of a thought capable of any save a very vague expression in words is a dangerous thing, too often but a disguise for the absence of a higher beauty in the work. Obviously, though, symbolism is to some extent inevitable. Complete detachment from the concrete is not possible, — even in music. Sculptors may chisel out of stone forms so perfect that they seem

to us, standing before them, to be expressions of abstract beauty with nothing of the man or woman left in them ; but they are none the less interpretations of the human body ; and painters do not cover their canvases simply with harmonious arrangements of colors. Just how far the subject rightly enters into the value of a work of art, it is hard to determine; but perhaps it may be an approximation of the truth to say that when the thoughts set astir by the thing presented reinforce the emotions primarily aroused by the manner of presentation, the subject has served its purpose.

This rare adjustment has seldom been more nicely attained than in Bartholomé's Monument to the Dead. At first sight of it, without as yet a thought of what it symbolizes, — without any thought at all, — one apprehends the spirit of the work in an emotion impossible of translation into words, yet as vivid and poignant as those of hate or love. Afterward, when this has faded, as

it must very soon fade, — moments of unalloyed feeling are brief, — one becomes aware of the symbolism in these massed figures and this black portal; and by the thoughts so set moving in his mind one conjures up the ghost of that first sharp emotion. For they are thoughts about feelings, — about the majesty, the inevitability, the cruelty, and the beauty of death; and although the initial emotion was subtler and stronger than any of these, it had yet something in common with each. Symbolism here has served a high purpose. I know of no monument to the dead nobler than this of Bartholomé's, save the tombs of the Medici in Florence.

The effect of the monument on the beholder, when he turns at last from it, is to leave him with a sense of only the great *fact* of death. The irony or the dignity, the sadness or the significance, which, according to his character, he is accustomed to find in the thought of it, he can, while

the spell lasts, no longer feel; for these are aspects depending for existence on his own personal judgment, and for the time being his personal judgment is suspended, as something distinguishing him from other men. Whatever he may individually have thought about death gives way temporarily before his consciousness of it as a universal fact.

It must have been by the Avenue du Puits that I left the Avenue Principale yesterday when I had withdrawn my eyes from the monument; for I recall passing the chapel of the Rothschilds and not far from it the tomb of Abélard and Héloïse. I could feel nothing incongruous in such a proximity, though I remember I thought it strange I could not. Jewish bankers of to-day and priestly lovers of centuries ago,—only different stories, written, it may be, by the same writer, holding each a certain ephemeral existence while one reads, none afterwards. The book remains when the reader

has laid it down, — words, — for one story as for another.

I do not know how long I wandered in the cemetery, but I followed many roads and stopped before many graves. Chopin, Larochefoucauld, Raspail, Ney, Daubigny, Casimir-Perier, — I said the names over to myself dully, but they stood for nothing here. Familiar characters all of them in the vague unconvincing novel we call Life; strangely futile, meaningless, and out-of-place in the midst of this eternal reality. It was as though some one had said to me: "Let me present Hamlet," or "Henry Esmond." The names I have enumerated, and others like them, were carved on stones a little apart from the rest, but such pauses were brief; inevitably after each would begin again the long line of shrunken houses; and it was in the monotonous uniformity of these that I saw the truth indeed symbolized. I remember stopping once — in what part of the cemetery I forget — by the monument

of a young English lord dead a hundred years ago, and being touched on reading the inscription, with its long list of family titles. Pathetic useless pomposity! A few feet of turf on either side, and the interminable array of tiny mortuary houses was resumed. Their persistence began to appall me. "How close those beneath must sleep! how close!" I thought; and I found myself lingering in a kind of relief before the isolated tombs. Reality is harder to face than fiction.

In the end, following the long course of the Avenue des Acacias, with its leafless trees that would be so full of blossom in the spring, and taking the second Avenue Transversale, I left the cemetery by a side gate, and stood for a moment just outside, looking across the city from the little adjacent hill that is used as a park. A long way off, on the heights of Montmartre, the great dome of the Sacré Cœur rose, a pale shadow through the mist. A fair promise for the man with

faith in a noble plan beneath all things, the vision of the white church seen from the cemetery gates; but faith is a rare gift, and to me the dome that hung so beautifully in the air symbolized only a glorious myth, the loveliest of the fairy castles we have built to console ourselves.

The cold November twilight was falling as I descended into the city. The mist still hung over Paris, but fainter, with a pale new moon struggling through it. The boulevards were brilliant with lights, and filled with a throng that ebbed and flowed slowly along the sidewalks and curved here and there in black spirals through the press of carriages in the streets. Whips cracked impatiently, horses' hoofs beat rhythmically on the pavement, and the vendors of evening papers cried their journals harshly; but, as I looked down from the *impériale* of my omnibus, it seemed to me that in this noisy confusion there was only the semblance of substantiality; reality was in the silence



On Boulevard Montparnasse


PARIS
BOULEVARD MONTPARNASSE

of the secluded place I had left. And the figures swarming here in the thoroughfare beneath me were less crowded than those motionless ones which lay beneath the ground of Père Lachaise.

What should it have mattered to me how close the dead slept? It mattered little to them. Why should that thought have remained the most vivid among those of the day? Yet all through the evening, as I sat before my fire, it haunted me, when the rest had grown dull. The mist was quite gone now; from my window I could see the moonlight rippling along the river, and I fell to imagining with what strange tracery, creeping through the bare boughs of the oaks and the acacias, it must cover the white tombs and the long rows of mortuary chapels in the cemetery, now that the great gates were closed, and there was no foot-fall to disturb the crowded silence. The vision was so vivid that I tried at last to put it into words, choosing verse, that I might make

of the first fancy the refrain it had become in my own mind.

How close the dead sleep in this silent place!
Piercing the gloom
Of guardian oaks, the moonbeams drift and trace
Strange shifting characters across the face
Of tomb on tomb
Innumerable; beneath there is no space
Unfilled, so close the dead sleep in this place!
Above them bloom
Pale flowers. Why should we grant them other grace?
Friends, aliens, foes, — they are now but one race,
Who need no room.
How close the dead sleep in this silent place!

On the Boulevard

An Interview



IX

An Interview

IT was a November evening. Outside, the rain was sweeping in gusts against the windows; but indoors, with the curtains drawn and a fire burning on the hearth, my little sitting-room was warm and cheerful. I had spread my papers out on the table before the lamp and put a new pen in the holder; but as I rose to light what I swore should be my last cigarette before going to work, one of the tiny logs in the fireplace collapsed with a shower of sparks. A sudden blaze followed, that illumined the whole room and shone especially on the green, gold-lettered back of a volume in one of the shelves opposite. I stepped across and took it down. It was "Le Mannequin d'Osier"

of Anatole France, the book that I love the best in contemporary literature. I carried it over to my place by the fire, and opened it, with that sweet sense of doing something a little wrong, to a favorite passage, intending to read only a few lines. But once under the spell of its incisive gem-like French, and the searching irony of its philosophy, I could not lay the book aside, but read on and on, turning the leaves in spite of myself, resolving as I began each new chapter that when it was finished I would stop, and each time breaking the resolution, until finally I reached the last word of the last page, and closed the covers with a sigh. Then I glanced at my watch; it was one o'clock. Too late to do any work now, and there was no good in regretting; so I put my papers away, and sitting back with "Le Mannequin d'Osier" still in my hand, fell to reflecting on it, and wondering about its author.

It is strange how few among the great men of the past one wishes he might have



Little Balconies


THE LITTLE BALCONIES
FROM MY STUDIO

known personally. I should like to have met Shakespeare and Mozart and Molière, it is true, and I would give all I possess to have been the humblest of Shelley's friends. But, as for most of the others, I am content with what they have left me of themselves. Toward authors of our own day, however, our feelings are necessarily different. We are in sympathy with their point of view. Their ideas are ours, only completer, more logically developed and better expressed. Their faults especially, which we possess in a greater degree, endear them to us. Thus it frequently happens that in reading a contemporary author we feel him to represent what is best and most worth-while in us; we are conscious of a desire, that is almost introspective, to meet this higher self face to face. So it was with me, as I sat looking into the fire, and fingering abstractedly the familiar pages of the book I had just re-read. I ran over in my mind all the scattering information I had been able to gather concerning Anatole

France — or Monsieur Thibaut, if you prefer his real name. He lived, some one had said, in a very small and closed society, and when he entered a salon every one was suddenly silent as at the entrance of a king. What means were there for an obscure foreigner to meet this genius, acquaintance with whom had become so rare and precious a thing for his own countrymen? I might write to him, but my letter would be only one of perhaps fifty. It had doubtless been many years since he had been able to feel anything but weariness in glancing over these monotonous outbursts of anonymous praise. Perhaps he no longer read them, but employed a secretary just to throw them into the fire. Nevertheless the idea tempted me. There could be no harm in writing, and I did not need to send the letter. I drew up close to the table and began.

It proved a difficult undertaking. All the thoughts awakened by the abbé Guitrel, the préfet Worms-Clavelin and the observations

of Monsieur Bergeret,—thoughts that touch on nearly every subject under the sun, as you will know if you have read the book, — clamored to be expressed, and to go trailing page-long parentheses behind them. But this would not do. The language of a letter fit for the greatest modern master of French to read must be concise and straightforward. I ended by suppressing the thoughts. When I had finished and was considering the scanty result, I reflected that to have spent the evening in work would have been less laborious. But here is what I had written:

Monsieur: — It is only because, having just re-read "Le Mannequin d'Osier" for the fourth time, I feel it would be ungrateful not to try to express something of the humble admiration I have for the creator of Monsieur Bergeret, that I venture to write to you. When I read "Le Livre de Mon Ami" and "Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard" I had self-restraint enough to repress the impulse I felt to tell you of the delicate pleasure they gave me; but with your "Histoire Contemporaine" it is different. Those four volumes have done more than

afford me keen enjoyment: they have made me think thoughts I should never have discovered by myself. Their point of view has helped to form my own. For the second one of the series I have a greater admiration than for any other prose work of the last twenty years. It would be useless to write you what I think of the book; if this were an intellectual letter it would be impertinent. Only permit me to say, monsieur, that we *transatlantiques* as well as your own countrymen appreciate the wholesome irony, the profound philosophy, the interest in humanity as it is, and the perfect art, of "Le Mannequin d'Osier."

It would have shown, I know, a truer gratitude on my part to have spared you this expression of enthusiasm, but I could not help myself. Before a splendid spectacle in nature one invariably utters a cry. The spectacle is not improved or in anywise changed, but the cry is irrepressible; it is uttered for oneself. Thus this letter is written really for myself. If you should take it in any other way, I should fear that you thought me a seeker of autographs.

Croyez, monsieur, etc.

Here followed my name (written very legibly); I did not add the address (it was printed on the paper).

I laid the pen on the table, and pushed

In the Quartier du Panthéon


RUE DE L'ECOLE POLYTEC

back my chair, then leaned over to throw more wood on the embers that were growing gray. In the morning I would send the letter.

Time passes as though one were only looking into the fire; events are scarcely more real than dreams. Could it be that the month had changed to December and the rain to snow, when one morning Eugénie brought me, together with two wedding announcements from America (for five years my friends seem to have had nothing to do but marry), an envelope addressed in an unfamiliar hand and stamped with the Paris postmark? I shall never feel anything sweeter nor more improbably perfect than my joy at the contents. They were simple, only a few lines on a sheet of thin paper:—

Villa Said, December tenth.

Monsieur: — Permit me to thank you for your flattering letter, and to express the hope that if you have no other engagement for Wednesday the fifteenth of

December, you will be kind enough to call on me that afternoon between four and five o'clock.

Be assured, monsieur, that I do not think you a "seeker of autographs," *et croyez etc.*

ANATOLE THIBAUT (ANATOLE FRANCE).

If I had no other engagement! I would have canceled anything, — even an appointment to take tea with Madame Steinheil!

Looked back upon, one's life is a series of disconnected scenes — islands floating in a sea of forgetfulness. There is nothing to prove to me that the days between that on which I received the letter and the Wednesday following existed; if they did, they must have been a period of impatient dullness. But the afternoon of the rendezvous is as distinct as yesterday in my memory, beginning with the moment when the servant led me from the door of the house through a half-seen hallway to another door, the heavy hangings of which he held aside while I crossed the threshold, then let fall behind me. As I entered the room beyond,

which I rather felt than saw to be a study, a man rose from an arm-chair beside an Empire table, and advanced to meet me. I was face to face with Anatole France.

My first impression, if I am to be honest, was not that he had wonderful eyes, nor yet that he was below medium height and was rather stout (though it might have been any of these), but a banal surprise that he should so strikingly resemble the portrait of him that I had seen at the Salon the preceding summer. It was less as though his likeness to it were remarkable (this, I suppose because I had seen the picture first, was the perverse way I found myself putting the thought), than as though he actually were the portrait.

"You are very welcome, monsieur," he said, in a French so exquisitely enunciated that the rasping quality of the voice itself was at once forgotten. "Pray be seated. Will you smoke?" Then, when he had lighted the cigarette he had proffered me and his own, he sank into a chair opposite mine and rested

his chin in his hand. "You are even younger than I thought," he observed at last without appearing to look at me.

"You knew I was young?"

"Yes," he remarked, but in the tone in which he might have admitted that this was a large city, or that we had been having cold weather. "You imagined that I had come to find letters of appreciation tiresome."

"You have not?"

"No," said Anatole France, "I still read them. Authors always do. I no longer get any pleasure from them, except"—courteously—"such as yours; but were they to cease suddenly, I should feel discontented and abused."

One end of his upper lip curled down into a cynical little wrinkle. He was like his own Monsieur Bergeret now,—and yet not like him either, less human somehow. I knew Monsieur Bergeret personally; I felt that I should never know his creator. I could not

rid myself of the idea that he was just the portrait I had seen in the Salon.

"At all epochs," he continued, "the mind has been popularly considered as subject to none, or to strange and incomprehensible laws, essentially different from those simple ones that govern the body. The murmurs of philosophy whose persistent tendency has been to prove the contrary, have never reached the ear of the masses; and indeed, had they done so, it is matter of doubt whether the masses would willingly have listened, for these popular misconceptions are obstinate and tenacious; it is through them that superstition and the belief in the miraculous maintain themselves. Philosophers welcome each reduction of complexity to simplicity as a new step toward the ultimate comprehension of the universe, which is their dream; but the masses, cherishing the belief that certain things cannot be understood, look upon each such reduction with disapproval. Columbus was derided, and it

is given to few to be as unpopular as Galileo."

I nodded approval. An immense pride was swelling in my heart. For I too had thought this out. The master whom I revered was expressing ideas I myself had had. A desire to cry as much into his ear and force his admiration wrung me; but I suppressed it, to listen again.

"The public, it is true, have," he went on, "some justification for the skepticism with which they have always treated the conclusions of philosophers; but I have only to turn my eyes inward to be increasingly convinced that here at least philosophy is in the right. The attributes of my mind — will, attention, and the rest — are, I observe with an instinctive displeasure, subject to the same laws that rule my body. The athlete experiences pleasure from his over-developed sinews during the brief time that he retains the memory of his former inferiority; afterwards, comparison becoming impossible once the

recollection of what he was has faded, he is conscious of no superiority. Nevertheless he has become the slave of his own strength. The muscles which he has trained into abnormal power must be ministered to, or a degeneration of his whole body will set in. Thus it is with the minds of authors. Their vanity has grown with pampering, like the liver of a Swiss goose. Flattery, which at first afforded them enjoyment, has become a necessity."

He paused, with a bitter smile.

"For pleasurable companionship," he added, "seek out men of affairs. Avoid authors and artists."

"And musicians," I suggested.

"And musicians," said Anatole France fervently.

There was a little pause. I was unhappy; for my exultation that Anatole France had expressed my own thought was less than my dissatisfaction that he did not know it.

"There were so many things I wanted to

speak to you of," I faltered at last helplessly, "and now they are all gone. Do you remember Heine's account of his meeting with Goethe? He had thought for years of the things he would discuss with the great man, but when he finally met him he found nothing to say except that the plums were ripe along the road he had followed."

"But I am very far from being Goethe," said Anatole France.

"Not so far as I from being Heine," I added hastily.

The author of "Thaïs" smiled again. "The compliment is neat," he observed.

I thanked him deprecatingly, but I felt secretly that he was right.

"You are the first American," he remarked, "to — you are American?" (I nodded) — "the first to write me concerning Monsieur Bergeret. I had fancied him unknown in your country."

"In America," I replied, "every one who reads French knows 'Le Livre de Mon

Ami,' and every one who reads anything besides the magazines and the current fiction is familiar with 'The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard'; but those who delight in 'Le Mannequin d'Osier,' emancipated as they are from social caste (for such an emancipation is one of the essentials to understanding Monsieur Bergeret), belong, I think, all the more, if unknowingly, to an intellectual caste, one of the rules of which is that acquaintance with an author's books does not give one the right to infringe on his personal life. I have broken the rule. I am unworthy of my class."

"It was a foolish rule," said Anatole France.

His eyes sparkled, and I laughed. I was reminded of a fencing exhibition I had witnessed once at the exercises of a girls' school. There had been no lunging, but much saluting and courteous crossing of foils.

"You said in your letter," he remarked simply, "that you admired my 'Histoire

Contemporaine,' but you did not say why. I should like to know now — if you will tell me."

I was flattered. It could be only interest in me that prompted his question, for he knew already a thousand times better than I why the books were masterpieces. He could learn nothing new about them from my reply, but he would learn what manner of person I was. My responsibility to myself was oppressive.

"There are so many reasons," I stammered. "I do not know where to begin."

"Beginnings are hard and invariably wrong," he observed thoughtfully, "so it does not matter; begin anywhere."

"I think most of all it is for their point of view," I said, "that I like the books,— the scrutinizing irony with which in them you look out on life, generalizing freely and acutely, but honestly and carefully, never unworthily from the mere masculine love of generalization, and finding the most where

Passage des Patriarches — Rue Mouffetard


MARCHAND DE VINS
PASSAGE DES PATRIARCHES

it seems to me the most is always to be found, — in the little things. It was, unless I mistake, from the tearful brutish protest of the servant Euphémie that Monsieur Bergeret drew the profoundest reflection in 'Le Mannequin d'Osier,' — that concerning the failure in the feminine mind to distinguish between the creative and the destructive forces."

"Yes," he assented.

"People have reproached you for treating too much the petty [*mesquin*] side of things, but that is because, accustomed to the heroics of most works of fiction, they forget that it is almost entirely of what is *mesquin* that life is composed. There are heroics — and heroism too — in your books; who will say that there were not both in the conduct of poor Madame de Bonmont? but, as nearly always in life, they were at the same time absurd; and this too was unpleasant to those readers."

"You are a warm adherent," said Ana-

tole France with a smile. I flushed. "But what you say is discerning," he added kindly. "My 'Histoire Contemporaine' will never be genuinely liked by the mass of readers, not even by the mass of intelligent readers; they have been fed too long on sweets, — though less here, I believe," he continued, "than in England or America."

"Oh!" I exclaimed sadly, "in England and America it is considered praise to say of a book that it may without danger be placed in the hands of a sixteen-year-old girl. The effect on our prose has been appalling. That some books should be written for girls of sixteen is well enough; that all books should be is distressing. The result has been to bar our prose-writers from the frank consideration of much that is vitally important in life, and to force them often into hypocrisy."

"Yet you have had books which were not afraid to discuss things as they are."

"In the eighteenth century, yes; few

since. Our poetry, thank God, has always been freer."

"Your poetry is inimitable; and your prose may yet be emancipated. Victorianism, Englishmen tell me, is dying."

"There was something else," I remarked a little timidly after a pause, "that I wanted to say of the 'Histoire Contemporaine.' It will perhaps weary you, but I should feel an ingrate if I should go away without having said it."

"I should be sorry not to hear it," he returned. "What you have already said has interested me."

"It was," I continued, "that in the form of those books you have gone one step beyond the novel."

It seemed to me that for the first time I had really interested Anatole France. He looked at me keenly.

"The novel is a splendid form, — the best we have had," I went on, "and much has certainly been done through it; but even

the novel truckles to romance. It has too sharp a beginning, too definite an ending; it is too much a whole to be capable of entire usefulness. In it the characters created fit together too nicely, so that in looking back from the end to the beginning one is aware of a rigid unity, a careful plan. To achieve such a work of art, to eliminate everything that has no bearing on the theme, to create only characters that serve in its development, must demand great talent; but, noble as the result is, it seems to me cramped by its own perfection. Life is not like that. It has both purpose and purposelessness. Things do not dovetail so accurately. Everywhere there are ragged ends hanging loose. In the four books of the 'Histoire Contemporaine' you let them hang. The characters you created have some influence on one another, but no more than they would have had if they had actually existed, and never for the furtherance of an artistic scheme. At times their lives touched, at times ran separately.

And yet it seems to me that in standing aside as you did, in watching it all as an observer, in giving never your own view of life, but the view held by each of your characters, you achieved a wider and truer unity than was ever reached in a novel."

I paused apprehensively, abashed at my presumptuousness. But the author's look was kindly.

"Your appreciation," said Anatole France, "is very grateful to me. That was indeed what I attempted to do."

Then we talked on — mostly it was I who talked — of Monsieur Bergeret, of Madame de Gromance, of the abbé Lantaigne and the abbé — later the bishop — Guitrel, of the préfet Worms-Clavelin and his amazing wife, and of the dog Riquet.

"The dog Riquet," observed Anatole France, "has the character accorded by all novelists who are liked to their heroes. In his attitude toward life there are unselfishness, humility and idealism. These qualities

are in fact to be found only in dogs. That is why novels, as you have so justly observed, are untrustworthy."

I rose to go. "It would be useless to attempt to tell you, monsieur, with what gratitude and pleasure I shall remember this hour you have granted me," I said; and he must have recognized my sincerity; for his smile was kindly. "It is such courtesy as that you have shown me which makes me love Paris," I went on. (There were vague thoughts struggling to take shape at the bottom of my mind. I must express them; for I felt them to be worth while.) "Friends, I think, are for the big things of life" (I know I spoke confusedly), "to depend on or to help in the great emergencies; and the two or three friends one needs one can perhaps most readily find among his own people. But while the big things arrive only very rarely, the little things are with us every day; our very social existence is constructed of them. For them one has acquaintances; and

acquaintances are more readily made here, I believe, than anywhere else under the sun. Friendship, after all, is somewhat barbarous, requiring on both sides a total loyalty which is unnatural, given the mutual knowledge of faults that must exist in so close an intimacy; acquaintanceship is less exacting and more civilized, binding one to nothing, and asking only that faults be kept discreetly out of sight for the time being. You knew, monsieur, that you would see me only for an hour and then perhaps never again, and yet there has been no hint of that in your kindness to me. You have talked with me as pleasantly as though we had dined together yesterday and were to drive in the Bois tomorrow. Paris is the only civilized country in the world. That is why I love it."

"Thank you," said Anatole France. "That is a very pretty speech."

"It was a very long one," I replied.

"You live in Paris always?" he inquired, touching the bell.

"Yes."

"One has to be a little foreign to be a Parisian," he went on musingly. "Those Frenchmen who are not so already, hasten to marry an American or adopt an English accent. But you will go back."

"To my own people?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry you say that," I remarked, "for I have secretly known it all along."

"Why be sorry?" he asked. "Is it so dreadful — America?"

"No," I answered quickly, "it is not dreadful. It is vulgar; but its vulgarity is only a sign of its exuberant vitality."

Anatole France nodded. "Vulgarity is to be found in whatever is great and young and splendid. Beethoven was vulgar, and Shakespeare and Michel Angelo."

"No, truly it is not dreadful," I repeated remorsefully.

He smiled. "No one is so detached as he thinks himself," he said. "One destroys pre-

judice after prejudice and conviction after conviction, as a man in a balloon cuts the cords that connect him with the ground and prevent his rising to a point whence he can look down on all things with a just and comparing gaze, yet there are always a thousand delicate fibres that hold him back from perfect freedom. You are cutting, cutting, but you are not completely detached, nor will you ever be. When I asked you whether America was dreadful you felt a swift shame at having insinuated as much. You are still patriotic."

"Perhaps," I murmured.

"Yet patriotism is just one of our innumerable prejudices. In a way, I confess to finding it admirable. I envy the ability of a man to hate passionately and inclusively a whole race, simply because he does not belong to it. I envy, because such a hatred reveals an intensity of feeling of which I am incapable. I envy, because I cannot understand. People are so pitifully alike [*se res-*

semblent si tristement],” said Anatole France wearily.

“It is strange,” he went on, “that patriotism should be so hard to shake off; for it is one of the most obvious prejudices. It is indeed no more than an expression of vanity, of the old thought, ‘What’s mine is better than what’s yours!’”

“Perhaps that itself is the reason,” I suggested. “Is not vanity very important?”

“True,” he assented. “Not vanity but selfishness, of which vanity is a corollary. Selfishness is at the root of every creative impulse. Without it the world would stop — or that little scum on the face of the world, that senseless activity, we call life.”

“*L’espèce de corruption que nous appelons la vie organique*,” I quoted swiftly.

“I am flattered that you remember so well,” he observed. “Ambition, inspiration, love,— they are all forms of selfishness — love more than the rest, as it is the most intensely creative.”

"But," I asked, "if patriotism is only vanity, why is it held to be something high and noble?"

"At all times," he replied, "men's vanity has made them contemplate incredulously their own futility, and led them to imagine themselves the tools of some higher force. With this premise selfishness was no longer a conceivable motive. It does no harm for the philosopher to recognize that God is on the side of the greater numbers, but the common soldier must think differently. No war of aggrandizement, or of selfish interest, has ever been successfully waged without a noble catch-word. 'God and My Right' was the slogan of Henry V as he laid waste France; the Germans sang 'Ein' Feste Burg ist unser Gott,' in the Franco-Prussian War, which was brought on by a forged telegram; and a poetess of your own country, I am told, has in a popular hymn made the armies of the North in your late war suggest that as Christ 'died to make

men holy,' they would 'die to make men free.'"

The servant had been waiting a long time. Anatole France took my hand.

"Your visit has given me a real pleasure," he said kindly. "I hope you will believe me."

"I must because I want so much to," I answered wistfully.

Then, when I was almost at the door, "You will go back sooner or later to your own country," he added, "but do not feel badly. You will never quite become part of it. Even from a captive balloon one has a wider, less biased view than from the ground."

I drifted out of the house in a dream. Anatole France had said that my visit had given him pleasure. Anatole France had talked with me as with an equal. And, indeed, reflecting on the interview, I was not displeased with myself. That speech on friendship and acquaintanceship had held

On Boulevard Sebastopol


PIGIER

ideas. The memory of the mocking little smile that had played around one corner of the great man's mouth from time to time barely troubled me. It was for others that his face had taken those lines; me he had not laughed at, I was sure.

But, in considering myself, which I have always done rather closely (with an intense, if amused, interest which my growing conviction that what I see there is rarely unique keeps from becoming fatuous), I am continually amazed at the abrupt changes in my moods. Thus I had barely reached the Avenue du Bois before my exhilaration left me like a fog that, suddenly lifting, lays bare the barren country beneath. I had seen Anatole France and heard him speak, and my sole concern was for what I had said, for the impression I had made. I had been given such an opportunity as would not come to one American out of ten thousand, and I had squandered it. I had had an hour with Anatole France, and I had spent it in trying

to show him that he might talk to me without stooping. Moreover, it was clear to me at present that this too had been at the root of my desire to meet my hero. I understood the twisted smile now, and was swept with humiliation. Then, effacing this petty shame with a profounder regret, came the thought of what I might have learned if I had not been preoccupied with myself. I had been unworthy of my riches; they had been, I muttered, as pearls before — But I would not finish the quotation. The word was too offensive in French, and I was still thinking in French. I had indeed seldom felt more French than now, when I knew so well that I should some day go back to America. And, after all, whatever I had missed, my hour with Anatole France had been splendid. (You will know without needing to be told that, having reached the end of the avenue, I was gazing up now at the Arc de Triomphe, if, like me, you too have stood before it and felt your own inner bickerings



Cafés



stilled by its white solemnity.) But the regret, though less acute, remained. There were so many things I might have learned! Why had I not at least asked —

The bell in a nearby church boomed two, and I started up in my chair with a smile. When one looks into the fire it is as though time were passing; dreams are almost as real as events. It was still November. My letter to Anatole France was on the table at my hand. I picked it up, laid it on the coals, and watched it as it curled inward, turned black, and burst into sudden flame.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 10029 924 5